

# **FINAL REPORT**

## **Traveler Information Services in Rural Tourism Areas Appendix B: Qualitative Interviews and Focus Groups**

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# Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Overview .....	2
<i>Objectives</i> .....	2
<i>Some differences between the Grand Canyon and Branson sites that will affect the tourist's utilization of ITS</i> .....	3
Potential Impact of ITS on Tourists .....	5
Factors Affecting Use of ITS .....	8
<i>Distance</i> .....	8
<i>Previous experience in the area</i> .....	10
<i>Season of travel</i> .....	11
<i>Travel planning styles of the focus group participants</i> .....	11
<i>How the travel styles relate to using information</i> .....	13
<i>The importance of travel style to ITS</i> .....	23
<i>Exceptions to the rule</i> .....	24
<i>ITS components travelers used or failed to use</i> .....	26
<u>Radio: Travelers did not use the ITS radio with any regularity.</u> .....	26
<u>Color codes in Branson: Color codes were somewhat effective.</u> .....	27
<u>VMS: High awareness, low utilization.</u> .....	29
<u>Kiosks: Non-functioning, but potentially valuable.</u> .....	29
<u>Websites: Not found by travelers, but well liked in interviews</u> .....	30
<u>Toll free traffic condition number: Too new to be known.</u> .....	32
Conclusions .....	33
<i>I-40 Corridor - Flagstaff and Grand Canyon</i> .....	34
<i>Branson</i> .....	34
Appendix A: Illustrative Interview Notes .....	A-1
<i>Flagstaff Tourist Interviews</i> .....	A-1
<i>Grand Canyon Tourist Interviews</i> .....	A-3
<i>Branson Tourist Interviews</i> .....	A-6



A Report on Qualitative Interviews Regarding  
ITS Applications in Two Major Travel Markets

Conducted in  
Northern Arizona  
and  
Branson, Missouri

Prepared by:

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**1999**

# Qualitative Research Findings Regarding Tourists' Use of ITS

Qualitative interviews were conducted with key informants and with tourists in northwest Arizona in Flagstaff and near the Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona, and in Branson, Missouri, in August and September 1998 (respectively).

Tourists were recruited at their hotels and asked to come to be interviewed at breakfast. They were paid \$5 to \$10 depending on the time and place, and were given a small gift such as a guidebook or coffee mug.

Cooperation was very high. People were interested in talking. They were not rushed since they were stopping for breakfast anyway, and since the interview was a short fifteen to thirty minutes.

The hotels were extremely cooperative, supporting the effort in any way they could.

Key informants to interview were suggested by the ITS teams in the test areas. Matt Burt (BRW) developed the lists of candidates for interviewing by discussing the profile of a key informant with the local teams. The target was any person who would be a primary user of the system, or whose regular professional job functions could be strongly impacted by a successful ITS system.

All interviews were conducted by Ms. Selena Barlow, or Dr. Hugh Clark.

# Overview

## **Objectives**

The original objective of the qualitative research component of the rural ITA was to obtain in-depth impressions of system users regarding how use of ITS components had influenced their travel planning or travel behavior. This assumed that the ITS components would have been in place long enough for tourists to have used it. As the scheduled time for the study arrived, the primary components of the ITS systems were either not operational or not widely known. Therefore, although the interview protocol did ask about awareness and use of ITS components, it was not expected that tourists could answer such questions very meaningfully.

The qualitative interviewing process nevertheless followed the original intent, and did ask about use of ITS components. However, the interviews also asked more generally how tourists sought travel information and made travel decisions. They did not concentrate solely on ITS components in decision making. We were interested not only in whether they had, for example, seen a kiosk, or the Arizona.tripusa.com website, but also in how they make travel plans and find tourist information about travel destinations, sub-destinations, routing, lodging, and dining. By understanding their entire decision making process, and placing ITS in that context, we could better understand how ITS would eventually be used as becomes more widespread and recognized.

Various factors influence the use of ITS. For example, people plan their travels in various ways which affect the use of information systems. Planning styles range from detailed advance planning done at a distance, to planning any given action only moments in advance, at or near a site. The components of ITS and the ways in which they are used vary with these styles. Familiarity with high-tech ITS mechanisms (Internet especially) is another influence. The distance from which a site attracts tourists is a third factor, and familiarity with the site from local residency or previous visits is a fourth. Whether one self-plans or relies on a travel agent to plan a trip is also a significant influence.

With effective ITS deployment radically limited as it was in August and September, the study therefore came to focus more on these kinds of factors influencing travel planning and that thus will impact on tourists' eventual use of ITS. Hopefully this information will assist the I40 and Branson TRIP projects to more effectively market the use of ITS components, and perhaps to "tweak" their design in some ways to make them more useful to the traveler.

Thus, regardless of their awareness of ITS components, tourists were asked such things as how they made their travel plans, whether they used any intermediary such as a travel agent or AAA, or whether they dealt direct with airlines and hotels. How did they learn of the secondary destinations such as minor attractions? Did they experience problems with finding locations or avoiding traffic congestion? If so, how did they cope with them? Had they noticed the ITS components or not? If so, had they used them?

## ***Some differences between the Grand Canyon and Branson sites that will affect the tourist's utilization of ITS***

Although both are part of the test of "Rural ITS," Branson and the Grand Canyon could hardly be more different as sites. Whether or not this is by design, the differences present interesting challenges for understanding tourist response to the same technologies in two very different settings. These differences strongly affect our understanding of how ITS elements function to help the tourist. Among the primary differences are these:

- **Type of site.** Rural ITS for I40 is centered in the Grand Canyon, which is a large public parkland serving as the core attraction of an immense area of Arizona. Branson is, in a sense, more like a large private theme park than like a city jurisdiction. Its indoor entertainment is the key attraction, although there are side and summer attractions at Table Rock Lake.
- **Length of stay.** The length of stay appears to fall in a narrower range in Branson than in the Grand Canyon/Northern Arizona area. The Grand Canyon attracts tourists who stay varied times, often for only a few minutes gazing at, and futilely trying to photograph, the Canyon. However, some people come for a longer time, seeing other area attractions which are many miles away. Branson, on the other hand, appears to attract tourists who come and stay for periods of several days to more than a week either to use the lake or to attend shows (or both).
- **Zone of tourist attraction.** The Grand Canyon attracts people world-wide. Branson, to date, appears to attract people primarily from a 300 mile radius. This difference has major implications for the kinds of travel information needed, the distance from which it must be accessed (e.g., the UK or Bonn vs St Louis or Kansas City), and the timing of when the information is needed for planning. This suggests the need to coordinate web-sites with kiosks so that the user becomes aware even at a distance that updated formation in the same format will also be available locally when they arrive at kiosks at specific locations.
- **Size of the site and range of conditions.** At the Grand Canyon a major traffic challenge is the drive to the Canyon from a great distance. In Branson, the primary challenge is intra-urban mobility, although sometimes Springfield to Branson mobility and certain other routes into Branson also present significant traffic problems. At the Grand Canyon, the range of weather is more varied, as is (obviously!) the terrain. Thus while ITS oriented to the Grand Canyon must be useful across a wide range of conditions and a wide stretch of territory, they must be concentrated at Branson. At the Grand Canyon, variable traffic and weather conditions cover a huge physical area and many different activities. In Branson, the range of activities and the physical area are both smaller and less diverse. Travel options are consequently more limited.
- **Traffic.** At the Grand Canyon some traffic problems involve intra-park mobility to some extent, just as intra-city traffic flows are a problem in Branson. But unlike Branson, traffic in the I40 corridor also involve moving large volumes of both truck and automotive traffic through long stretches of roadway to, and often past, tourist attractions. While

I40 has a large volume of trucking, Branson appears to have little through truck traffic. Thus the total scope of traffic management concerns is very different.

- **Peak.** There are undoubtedly traffic peaks on I40, but the difference between peak and trough of traffic is not as concentrated in time and space as in Branson. Branson is a small town with dozens of large theaters with tens of thousands of seats, and schedules which often cause shows to end within minutes of each other, disgorging literally thousands of cars into three lane roads as people, many or most of them senior citizens, return to their hotels or go to restaurants. Using information to help drivers manage their routing decisions in these two cases is fundamentally different.

The implications of these differences in peaking for ITS are many and varied. One example of the impact at a local level would involve the kiosk system for providing tourists with local traffic information to avoid congestion. At the Grand Canyon, a kiosk system could be used by hundreds of people in a consecutive manner and could have some effect on traffic and therefore on personal mobility. In Branson, however, where traffic suddenly peaks as a result of shows ending, one or a dozen kiosks at every site would have negligible effects unless connected to some type of oversize, overhead monitor visible to many users at one time. Even then, it is not clear what decisions people could make at Branson that would be very advantageous since patterns of congestion would appear to change rapidly as hundreds of people responded to the traffic flow monitors congesting the very routes that appeared a few moments earlier to be flowing relatively well. (Unfortunately, given the lack of effective system installation at the time of the test it was not possible to question tourists about this possibility.)

- **Demographics.** Demographics vary widely between the sites. The ranges of age, income, race, and geographic dispersion are greater by far at the Grand Canyon than they are in Branson. Branson tends to attract senior citizens. We have been told that in the summer the outdoor attractions draw many younger families. However, the major traffic problems we observed related to the theater crowds which, in the fall of 1998 when the interviews were conducted, tended to be disproportionately composed of persons over the age of sixty. The Grand canyon, on the other hand, attracted every age group from parents with infants to some seniors.

The range of income was similarly narrower in Branson than at the Grand Canyon. Being entertained in Branson requires buying individual show tickets, probably to several shows. Being entertained at the grand Canyon requires visiting sites which may impose an entry fee per car. Thus, the financial requirements for enjoying oneself at each site vary dramatically, and the result seems to be a tendency for tourist incomes at the Grand Canyon to vary across a wide range, while those at Branson varied in a narrow range.

Ethnic and racial diversity at the two sites is subject to the same kinds of different distributions. Because of cultural and language differences, this has implications for ITS. Whatever the reasons (the types of entertainment, the scale of the attraction, the distance from which people travel) the substantial ethnic and racial differences among US citizens at the Grand Canyon were a reflection of middle class America. Additionally, Eastern and Western Europeans were also represented. Some Japanese

were also present. In Branson, however, the tourists were uniformly Caucasian, US Citizens, and English-speaking.

How does this difference in diversity relate to ITS? While most of the Grand Canyon tourists -- even those from Europe -- spoke English, there clearly could be an interest for information in other languages there that would not exist among Branson visitors. Publicity strategies for promoting use and understanding of the ITS systems would clearly be affected.

Age also makes a difference. Age range differences between the sites mean that the rates of adoption of new information technologies will tend to differ. Thus, for example, we encountered fewer people in Branson who had used the Internet for trip planning. However, this tendency ought not be exaggerated. We did encounter several Branson tourists who had used a trip-planning CD Rom from AAA, but found none in the Northern Arizona area. This suggested to us that perhaps an old trusted source such as AAA made adoption of high technology more palatable for those older persons who otherwise might not use it. Moreover, age made no apparent difference in willingness to use established technologies such as VMS and radio.

However, the easy use of kiosk and web technology clearly does differ with age, and thus that age affects utilization of ITS. It is therefore also clear that if sites differ dramatically in both mean age and distribution of ages among travelers, then the utilization of ITS will inherently be different, at least until the use of such things as kiosks and the Internet become universally accepted.

The physical, economic, and cultural characteristics of rural tourist sites where ITS is being utilized in a concentrated way obviously affect the way in which tourists utilize it or fail to do so. It is also clear, however, that regardless of how these factors affect public utilization, ITS in both Branson and the I40 corridor can have a significant indirect effect on tourists. This occurs through more rapid feedback of traffic and safety conditions to public authorities. This will be discussed further in the section which follows. In Branson, for example, MODOT staff indicates that the local ITS system monitors traffic for motion. Traffic which remains stationary for a pre-set period of time triggers notification to the system operator so that the local police force can investigate, first by remote camera, and then by going to the location. At Flagstaff, continual weather and traffic updates enable dispatching and traffic engineering authorities to respond quickly to rapidly changing conditions, marshaling responses in a more timely way. Utilization of the same information by travelers themselves is a longer range phenomenon that will require major system improvements which will be discussed later in this report.

## **Potential Impact of ITS on Tourists**

Although the impact of ITS on tourists at the time of the study was virtually nil because of the lack of effective deployment at the time, there were various reasons to believe that it has substantial potential.

For example, it was the key informants at both Branson and I40 who were most optimistic about the impact of ITS technologies in general and the website in particular. At the Grand Canyon,

to take one instance, the Chief Dispatcher of the National Park Service observed that the website was accurately and frequently being updated from various sources within ADOT. She felt the continual flow of timely information to the website would give her immediate and heightened control that would enable her to dispatch personnel more rapidly to deal with matters of public safety and traffic control, including snow, fire, accidents, or other problems. Tourists would benefit from this improvement indirectly. Probably they would be unaware of the benefit. But objectively traffic would be more controlled, and travel conditions would be improved.

The City Traffic Engineer in Flagstaff similarly saw the system's potential to accurately provide his office with early severe weather warnings that would enable ADOT to direct truckers around severe snow storms, thus saving Flagstaff from the debacle of 1997 when thousands of trucks were stranded there by heavy snows.

Similarly, at Branson tourists have already reported noticing improved traffic flows, although they had no idea why improvement had occurred. In fact new roads were in place, color coding of roads had occurred, and traffic authorities had in operation a motion-sensitive system for detecting friction in traffic flows. Taken in combination, these actions had begun the process of altering traffic flows in the tight quarters of the tiny city of Branson, with its unique peak traffic loads and narrow central roadway.

Various key informants, including hotel managers, Department of Transportation personnel, restaurateurs, and others, all observed that the ITS systems would serve to have indirect impacts by providing better intelligence systems for controlling traffic, as well as potential impacts on tourists.

However, at the time of the research visit the system was quite new and these kinds of indirect results were nearly as difficult to specify as direct tourist benefits. Nevertheless, during the visit a fire occurred on the Canyon's North Rim which illustrated the point of significant indirect positive impact. The fire was appropriately and quickly reported, orders issued for fire-fighting, road closures and traffic diversions. Resulting traffic conditions for tourists were reported on the website. At that time there were no ways to quickly convey this information to visitors themselves. Any effects, therefore were indirect. Visitors in the focus groups reported having seen smoke, or being detoured from the rim. Yet in the long run, as the dissemination of this kind of information occurs more widely to the tourist end-user, this kind of information will have direct as well as indirect effects.

As the system expands in acceptance it is likely that it will pass through a middle stage, with hotel concierges and other tourism staff relying on it for information to give tourists even if very few tourists themselves access the site directly.

Another example of indirect effect comes from Flagstaff. The city traffic engineer in Flagstaff indicated (as we have reported earlier) that improved weather information dissemination via the website, coupled with the ability to deliver messages to truckers via variable message signs would alleviate the severe problems caused by unexpected snows and stranding of many trucks.

But there are, in the view of key informants, also potential direct effects of ITS on tourist behavior. For example, the key informants in Flagstaff (city officials, Chamber of Commerce,

Convention and Visitor's Bureau, an information provider, and a restaurateur) agreed that it is not entirely easy for a tourist unfamiliar with the city to find his or her way to destinations within the city or through the city to other destinations. Some key informants for example, felt that signage for tourists at the major exits from I40 was not adequate. However, they acknowledged that "...you can't sign for every destination in Flagstaff." Adequate signage would appear to require either (or both) prioritizing the attractions for exist signage or creating some type of zoned system (much as Branson's main streets are color coded) to which to direct tourist traffic.

VMS, in the view of one key informants, has great potential in the northern Arizona area. For example, He feels that VMS can be used for information purposes beyond their present uses, and that this would help reduce tourist confusion and expedite traffic flow (e.g., "Grand Canyon campgrounds are full by noon, make alternate lodging plans.")

Another VMS application relates to the changing interaction between local traffic, through traffic, and tourist traffic. Part of this problem is expediting the flow of traffic through Flagstaff toward the Canyon. Another aspect is alleviating the conflict between local and tourist traffic. The fact that I40 passes tangentially to Flagstaff creates another traffic related problem, according to the Traffic Engineer. He pointed out that parts of I-40 are becoming de-facto arterial streets in the immediate Flagstaff area. This increases congestion. He feels the need to get information about local congestion to long range truck drivers and tourists driving through. He feels these problems could be alleviated by increased number of VMS and in the future devices to communicate current traffic conditions instantly to drivers, these problems will persist.

To expedite the flow of traffic in Flagstaff itself, he looks forward to expansion of a kiosk program to hotels, the airport and rest areas. He feels, however, that the kiosks should be able both to show and to print out maps.

The Missouri DOT personnel in Branson anticipate that the severe traffic problems experienced in Branson will be alleviated not only by the dissemination of traffic information on the website, but also because local traffic advisories will be more effectively communicated. At the time of the study, however, there were no VMS in the city itself to redirect traffic, and no other mechanisms (such as linking hotel front desks or MC's of shows to the website) to advise motorists of current traffic conditions.

Restaurateurs and other private business interests we spoke with also concluded that the systems had significant potential. one restaurateur, for example, speculated that when his kiosk was installed, it could provide a simple means for the customer to obtain information about and directions to other destinations. The goodwill this would generate, and the savings in staff time (answering questions) would offset any cost. However, some of them -- especially hotel interests and the Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce -- were very concerned with the prospect of on-line tourist information in their lobbies.

It appears that these systems have substantial potential for indirect impact which was not realized at the time of the study primarily because of the lack of system penetration at the time.

# Factors Affecting Use of ITS

The impact on tourists of ITS systems deployed in the test sites have effects which vary widely not only with the characteristics already discussed, but also with several other factors. These include:

- The distance from which travelers come.
- Travelers' previous experience in the area.
- The season of travel and resulting weather and traffic conditions.
- The place of the destination in the scope of their travel purposes.
- The availability of alternative sources of information.
- Travelers' level of comfort with Internet technology.
- The style of their travel planning, including the extent of lead time for planning, tendency to travel without reservations, and the tendency to delegate planning to professionals.

In the qualitative interviews we were able to observe all of these factors. The primary factors which limited the interviews were the lack of deployment of kiosks, the lack of awareness of the Arizona and Branson Internet web sites, and the lack of adverse traffic or weather conditions at the time of each study. Nevertheless, we were able to describe these components well enough for tourists to understand and respond to them conceptually.

## ***Distance***

The distance from which a traveler is coming affects the type of information needed and the source from which it is usually obtained. In northern Arizona<sup>1</sup> we spoke with travelers from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic as well as with people from as nearby as Phoenix.

In general, the greater the distance, the greater the need for macro-level information about the entire area. Thus websites and travel guides were heavily used by Europeans. (Many, especially the British, mentioned a publication called the *Rough Guide*, a guide to the American West.) These gave them a broad overview and preview of the sites they could visit and the sights they could see.

On the other hand, when travelers near their destination, their travel information needs change. Once in northern Arizona, travelers were interested in hotels (if they had no reservation – see “Travel Information Styles,” below), restaurants, minor attractions, weather, and local routings rather than a “big picture” perspective. They then wanted local maps, local attraction information, restaurant menus, and so forth. But at a distance their need was for more general travel and attraction information.

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<sup>1</sup>Travelers coming from Europe were encountered frequently in the groups in the I40 test site, but not at all in Branson. Within the United States, travelers to Branson tended to come from a radius of seventy-five to four-hundred miles. However, they came from near (e.g., Phoenix) and far (e.g., New Jersey) to the Grand Canyon.

The traveler's time frame for decision-making also obviously changes with distance. At a distance planning is usually casual. At the local level the time-frame is very short. As a traveler at a destination, one needs a room tonight, a weather forecast before breakfast, a restaurant in a few hours, or a site to visit tomorrow. Thus there is little time to seek information. The need is immediate. This means that hotel lobbies are especially useful sites for local travel information, rest areas for information on meeting needs less immediate, and the web-site itself for information at a macro level.

Tourists may go to a tourist information center such as the Visitor Center in Flagstaff, or the public Dewey Short Center in Branson or one of the numerous private centers in Branson. But if they do so they seem to go there only once and primarily to obtain as much detailed information about local attractions as possible.

In contrast, travelers use their hotel lobby as a source for all kinds of short run information, and they use it repeatedly if they are staying more than one night. Consequently, a good concierge who can suggest and arrange for tickets for tours or performances, or suggest a restaurant is a valuable resource for both the traveler and an "added value" for the hotel. Similarly, printed information is also in demand there. The information source is at hand, easy to interact with, and the information clear and immediate. There are staff people nearby to ask for clarification if things are unclear.

For all these reasons, a kiosk, or several kiosks, in hotel lobbies could be especially helpful -- if they were fast and easy to use. As advantageous as this would be for meeting the need for immediate information close to the destination, at the time of the interviews, no kiosks were planned for hotel lobbies either in the I40 test area or in Branson. Several hotel managers in both FOT's -- all of whom were extremely helpful, friendly, cooperative and who went out of their way to be supportive of this study -- nevertheless told us explicitly that they would not allow installation of kiosks in their lobbies.

They were concerned that a kiosk in their lobby would be able to advertise competing hotels and hotel restaurants. Why, they asked, should they play host to such a Trojan Horse?

The Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce also apparently resists having a Castle Rock kiosk in their office lobby since, we were told, it would advertise the businesses of non-Chamber members as well as members.<sup>2</sup> It may also go beyond this uneasiness with loss of control over lobby information, however. Two hotel managers interviewed as key informants said that contractual constraints on their franchise agreements prevented any display of competitor information in the lobby.

The hotel lobby is very important in the geography of information distribution. The kind of information people would seek from it is the kind they now seek in the lobby more than they would from tourist rest areas. Eventually, if (or when) hotels are typically equipped with web tv, or notebook computers become a universal travel accessory, on vacation, this will become a

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<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, none of the key informants saw any reason to ban the local Yellow Pages or newspapers from their offices, both of which obviously carry advertising for competing hotels and for non-Chamber members. This suggests that in the long run, perhaps the kiosk concept might also be accepted.

moot point. Until then, an ITS system without hotel lobby installations will be seriously incomplete.

At the present time at these sites, however, the novelty of the kiosk-based traveler information system, coupled with restrictive corporate rules are too great to overcome resistance to the system at least in the short run. We do not know if the concept will eventually win acceptance without selective presentation of tourist destinations while offering no access to hotels, and possibly no access to restaurants.

INFORMATION SOURCES VARY WITH PLANNING STYLE AND PLANNING STYLE VARIES WITH DISTANCE. Distance encourages planning, and thus the use of guide books and the Internet well before a trip begins. For ITS system developers, this means that an Internet web site can be especially useful to the traveler who carefully pre-plans, and comes from a great distance. This implies a need to construct travel web sites with the distant tourist's perceptions in mind. For example, to judge from the travelers we interviewed, the European traveler to the Grand Canyon is not likely to be aware of the extreme weather differences within Arizona, the great distances between cities, tertiary attractions to visit or other characteristics that would be helpful. Yet he or she will tend to have hotel reservations made through international chains. He or she may also not read English. Thus maximizing the utility of the website as a trip planning tool (as opposed to a local traffic management tool) means making it useful at a distance by providing a big-picture overview

### ***Previous experience in the area***

Previous experience with the travel destination has a major impact on information use. Residents of the nearby areas tend, of course, to be rather familiar with both Branson and northern Arizona. In the case of Branson, for example, prior experience makes people more aware of how to get around, but also makes them more sensitive for the need to adjust local travel to peak traffic loads, and to be aware of new information sources such as the color coded routes.

In northern Arizona, previous experience meant that some travelers wanted to find new secondary sites. Others simply wanted to confirm their routings.

In a sense, the ultimate in "previous experience" is local residence. In Branson, for example, key informants say that local residents have learned ways to skirt the traffic by using unconventional routes through side streets, and thus tend to feel that the ITS traffic aids would be of little use. In fact, several of them, referring to the one existing traffic signal intended to divert traffic from a particular route into Branson at peak times, told us that they drive counter to the signal because "*...all the tourists follow the signal, so the so-called alternate route gets all tied up.*" Whether this is common practice cannot be known from the focus groups alone. But it is clear that the local resident will tend to have a very different perspective from the tourist. It may also indicate that certain kinds of traffic management devices may have some countervailing effects in a site as congested as Branson.

In Arizona, residents of Phoenix and various towns within a few hours of the Grand Canyon were more aware of the attractions, and needed no help with lodging. But they were also more acutely aware than other travelers of the value of continual updates of the weather and traffic

reports from ADOT in planning their travel in the area. Thus they, more than travelers from a distance, placed a high value on the potential value of weather bulletins delivered by VMS, kiosks, the Internet, and other systems.

## ***Season of travel***

The tourists and key informants were extremely clear about the seasonality of travelers' needs for information. In northern Arizona especially, severe winter weather creates difficult travel conditions for through traffic on I40 and through (and around) Flagstaff, and for managing the flow of traffic and people in the Grand Canyon. The traffic engineer for Flagstaff was very hopeful, for example, that the ITS systems could help Flagstaff avoid a situation they faced a year ago when thousands of truckers failed to avoid a major blizzard and became stranded for days in Flagstaff when forced to seek refuge there. This imposed enormous obstacles to snow removal there and other enormous burdens on the local infrastructure.

Similarly the chief dispatcher at the Grand Canyon's park Service office expressed hope that in managing the flow of traffic and people in the winter months, prompt information fed through the web site would enable her to manage security, maintenance, and other forces and their equipment with greater effectiveness during both summer and winter.

Travel purposes, and therefore information needs, also change with the season. In Branson, for example, shows are a year-around constant. But outdoor activity in the lake region obviously peaks in the summer. In the winter, especially near Christmas, shopping at local discount malls, we are told, brings a peak in traffic headaches. Thus, to the traffic authorities in Branson, the seasons do not bring harsh weather, but they do bring changing traffic management challenges. One Branson tourist commented on the seasonal differences in simply getting to Branson:

*Selena<sup>3</sup>: How about traffic? Has traffic been a problem in the past?*

*Male: A couple of years ago when we came, I guess we stayed in Springfield and we drove down and were planning on going to Whitewater. The kids were a little bit younger and wanted to go to a water park. We had traffic jammed from before you got to Shepherd of the Hills all the way into town! It was stopped. You'd be just barely moving all the way into town. It was a weekend and in the middle of the summer. It probably wasn't good planning on our part.*

*Selena: But you didn't have any problem like that last night (September)?*

*Male: No. It went pretty good coming in last night.*

## ***Travel planning styles of the focus group participants***

The tourists interviewed vary widely in their travel planning styles. Based solely on the interviews at these two sites, we have categorized travel styles. This categorization is not intended to be definitive. That would require more interviews at more sites. But the categorization gives some idea of how the impact of ITS varies systematically among travelers.

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<sup>3</sup> Selena Barlow conducted half of the interviews on which this paper is based. Hugh Clark conducted the others.

Among the respondents in this study, travel planning, and use of ITS varied within four primary dimensions:

**1. Proximity of traveler to destination**

Distant (Travel to destination) <-----> Close (Travel at and near destination)

As we have already pointed out, information needs and thus the use of various ITS components varies with distance and the timing of travel planning. This could also be described as a *Timing* dimension since for most people there is a considerable time between planning and arriving.

**2. Autonomy vs self-planning**

Low autonomy (Agent plans) <-----> High autonomy (Self planner)

Some travelers use agents (in England, "Brokers") to plan their trips. These travelers tend to be affluent business people. They have no need for the Internet for trip planning. If they use guidebooks, the broker may have supplied them. All arrangements have been made in advance. They feel their only use of ITS components will be at the local level, helping them follow detours, understand traffic delays, confirming directions, choosing restaurants, checking weather, understanding secondary sites.

**3. Comfort with technology**

Low tech <-----> High tech

Travel information sources run the technological gamut from printed materials (maps, brochures, road signs, color-coded routes), through toll-free numbers and variable message signs (VMS), to web sites available via computers and computer kiosks, and traffic information available by cell phone.

Those who plan and arrange their own travel ("Self-planners") can be loosely classified by their reliance on higher or lower tech sources for travel information. Conceptually, the "lowest tech" would be those who operate at the lowest level of abstraction and the shortest time-frame, relying only on word of mouth and road signs and not even using maps. We actually did observe one such travel party, but they were unique, and there are clearly too few such travelers to anchor the low end of the technology continuum.

Typically, the "low tech" end of the continuum is anchored by those who rely on a mix word of mouth, guidebooks, maps, and toll-free numbers. The middle is dominated by those who combine those sources with the Internet to obtain general information about the destination, but not to obtain details or to make reservations or purchase tickets. The high tech end is anchored by those who rely primarily on the Internet, not only for information but for checking weather, making reservations, printing maps, and purchasing tickets.

Quite obviously the technology dimension is changing rapidly. Toll-free numbers and on-the-phone credit card transactions to guarantee rooms hardly existed twenty years ago, but now anchor the low tech end of the continuum.

#### 4. Depth and detail sought in travel planning information

Low detail sought in  
travel information



High detail sought in  
travel information

Travelers vary in the depth and detail they want in travel information. Those who plan in detail want to know what hotels are available, what major and minor sites should be visited, what restaurants are in the area, what ancillary activities are available. The user of high detail and depth information will tend to use it from the very first inkling of traveling. And then they use it to understand their destinations, their lodgings, their schedule.

The users of heavily detailed information generally told us they had a rather fixed schedule. The schedule included specific sites to visit, a day of departure, and reservations at specific lodgings. The schedule was rarely presented as absolutely rigid. But variation could occur only within the limits of the plan and the next night's reservations. They told us that this places limits on the possibilities of additional ancillary trips. It also makes it imperative that ITS systems include mileage and time estimates in electronic maps if the kiosks and websites are to be of maximum use in promoting additional travel at a destination area. (The two travelers who appear to have found the Arizona.tripusa website noted that there were no estimates available there and that they left the site as a result.)

Not all travelers seek information early in their trip. Those who are more carefree, tend to not seek information early, but to set out without even having hotel reservations or concrete plans of what to see or where to stop.

Quite obviously their needs for information from an ITS system are very different depending on the style of travel. One will use information remotely in time and space and is a good candidate for Internet sites, toll-free numbers, or other early planning materials such as guide books. The other is a candidate only for good local signage, for VMS, for tourism television loops in the hotel room, for brochures – or kiosks – in the hotel lobby, and for tourist information centers.

### ***How the travel styles relate to using information***

The tourists we spoke to in the two series of focus groups obtain and use information in various ways. We have categorized them in a simple scheme which combines the use of technology in information seeking with the extent of the information sought. The four conceptual categories we observed among the focus group participants are described in the table below.

The categories suggest that any ITS system used for a tourist site will have to relate to the differing travel styles of the tourists who frequent the area. For example, one implication is that a website is, at the present time, of little use for the Branson traveler, but of considerable use to the northern Arizona traveler simply because of the differing travel information styles tourists use. Conversely, it also suggests that traditional signage, and low-tech devices such as color coded streets would be very effective in Branson.

A schematic view of the categories appears on the following page.

	Low detail in planning	High detail in planning
High Tech	<p><b>High tech / Low detail</b></p> <p><b>The <i>High-Tech Non-Planner</i> -- a conceptual set only -- not observed in the focus groups]</b></p> <p>Conceptually, these cases would arrive at a destination with no plan and seek out electronic information once there. This traveler type will develop in the future if and when portable electronic devices are routinely carried on vacation or kiosk types of local information sources become ubiquitous.</p>	<p>High-tech / High detail</p> <p><b>The <i>Modern Traveler</i>.</b></p> <p>We encountered many of these especially in Arizona.</p> <p>Obtains prior reservations. Roughly allocates time to each site. Aware in advance of much detail about destinations.</p> <p>Educated, younger, usually, though not always affluent, traveling from a distance.</p> <p>For travel information, uses Internet, guide books (including AAA, Fodors, Rough Guide and other books) toll-free numbers. Knows how to utilize the concierge. Carries guidebooks. Often flies in, rents car. Sometimes drives long distances.</p> <p>Many in northern Arizona. Almost none in Branson.</p>
Low tech	<p><b>Low-tech / Low detail</b></p> <p><b><i>Nomadic vacationer.</i></b></p> <p>We found a few of these in each FOT.</p> <p>Few or no prior reservations. Not concerned about not finding accommodations at the next stop. Will deviate from initial destination at short notice to go to a place that appears interesting. May want to physically see hotel rooms before booking.</p> <p>Probably uses a map, but relies heavily on road signs, billboards, and local tourist information at roadside stands and hotel lobbies.</p> <p>Usually less educated. Varies in age. Not worried about a place to stay. This segment seems to include a very small niche of include some educated travelers interested in travel spontaneity.</p>	<p><b>Low-tech / High detail</b></p> <p><b><i>Traditional auto-traveler.</i></b></p> <p>We encountered many of these in both locations, but this was the dominant mode in Branson (except for tour-bus passengers who were not included in the study, but who comprise a significant proportion of Branson visitors).</p> <p>This traveler makes prior reservations and keeps schedule. Uses guidebooks, maps. If US citizens, often use AAA maps, trip-tiks and guidebooks. Uses toll fee numbers. Locally very likely to visit a tourist center and to use brochures in the hotel lobby.</p> <p>Generally middle income, sometimes lower middle. Hold jobs that do not require use of Internet.</p>

**Modern traveler.** This category was well represented by Europeans and by Americans from the East Coast. Almost all of the European tourists carefully planned their trips. For example, a young Polish business technocrat on temporary assignment in the United States with two-weeks vacation. He had decided that during those two weeks his family would see the United States from coast to coast, by car. He planned his trip in detail, using the Internet, guide books, maps, and 800 numbers.

Several American families had traveled by car or by air to the Grand Canyon from New York and New Jersey. One family we interviewed, for example, represented a middle level mix of technologies. had researched area attractions and accommodations using the Internet and guide books, called toll free numbers at hotels they found on the Internet sites, flew to Phoenix, and then drove to northern Arizona. They described their experiences to Selena Barlow:

*Selena: Would you describe how you decided to come to this area and how you went about planning your trip?*

*Male: We definitely wanted to get away to Phoenix and then go north. We knew the weather was much better up here and just more beautiful and lot of things to see. So, that's how we decided to come up. Planning the trip, we had some tour books and stuff from AAA that we used. We went on the Internet a lot to different websites. We found out everything we could about where to stay and where to eat and how to get around. The trip itself is really easy. Just take I-17 straight up.*

*Selena: You mentioned that you had tour books from AAA and went on the Internet. Which of those elements did you use to decide where to stay?*

*Male: The tour book definitely.*

*Selena: Okay. How about deciding what attractions to see?*

*Male: A mixture of both. There were a lot of things we didn't know about that we were going to try to see while we were up here like historic downtown Flagstaff and some of the other national monuments and parks.*

*Selena: So, those pieces of information expanded your idea of places you might go?*

*Male: Right. Absolutely.*

*Selena: Which would you say was more influential, the Internet stuff or the tour book or just sort of a ...?*

*Male: Probably the Internet.*

*Selena: When you got on the Internet and started looking, how did you go about finding information? What did you look for?*

*Male: Just things like "Flagstaff" and "Grand Canyon" and just saw what came up.*

*Selena: Did you find any sites that were particularly helpful or did you have any problems finding the information you wanted?*

*Male: The only thing I can say is we couldn't find the information about the local restaurants. We were mainly interested in not going to fast food, but going to places that weren't too expensive. So, we were looking for price ranges and really couldn't find any.*

*Selena: Any other problems that you ran into?*

*Male: Not really. Everything else was great. I mean the places to go see and how to get there. It was no problem finding all that stuff on the Web.*

*Selena: Do you remember visiting this particular website? (Shows color printout of Arizona.tripusa website) Does that look familiar?*

*Male: No.*

*Selena: Didn't get to that one, huh?*

*Male: No. It's probably because of the way we went about looking for stuff just by searching Flagstaff and stuff. No, we didn't see that one.*

*Selena: Okay. Did you call any 800 number to get information about the area?*

*Male: No.*

*Selena: During your trip in Arizona, at any of the places that you went, were there electronic kiosks that provided information? Did you use anything like that?*

*Male: No.*

*Selena: Have you just started your trip? Did you just get here?*

*Male: Right. We're going to visit the Visitor's Center today.*

*Selena: They have one of those kiosk there. During the course of the trip, did you see any of the big electronic variable message signs that tell you about road construction, traffic, detours and things like that?*

*Male: Sure.*

*Selena: Did any of those provide any information that changed the trip?*

*Male: There wasn't anything on them coming up. It was a Thursday, so traffic wasn't really heavy.*

*Selena: Okay. There are some radio stations that provide information about road conditions. Were you aware of those or did you use any of those?*

*Male: I would say no to both. I'm sure that we knew that there was something like that because everywhere you go there is something like that. We didn't really know which one it was here.*

*Selena: Is this the first trip that you've used the Internet to plan?*

*Male: No, probably not. I've probably used it before.*

*Selena: How would you compare using the Internet to more traditional methods like the guide books?*

*Male: I would say it's much better because you can find a lot of information quickly. It's all right there at your fingertips. You don't have to get any books.*

*Selena: Are there any other comments you would make about using the Internet as a planning tool versus other things that make it better? Have you found better places to go? Have you found attractions you wouldn't have gone to otherwise?*

*Male: Oh, yes. Absolutely. I mean finding out about what else is up here just in Flagstaff alone. Definitely the Internet has helped with that.*

*Selena: Okay. Give me an example of something.*

*Male: Historic downtown. I never would've known that was there and we're definitely going to visit that. We're probably going to go see the Cardinals practice when we come back this weekend. We wouldn't have known how or where to do that.*

*Selena: That's back in Phoenix?*

*Male: No, right here. At Arizona University. There's a bunch of things. My wife knows more about them than I do, but there's a lot of places around here like local history and art museums that I wouldn't have guessed were here. I've never been here.*

*Selena: But you mentioned that for actually selecting your lodging, you did that more out of the tour book?*

*Male: Right. The AAA book.*

*Selena: How did you make your reservations?*

*Male: Through a travel agent. We figured out where we wanted to go first. The tour books are great because they rate the hotel rooms. You get all the amenities that they have or don't have and what their rate range is, and it's pretty accurate. If they had something like that on the Internet, I'm sure we'd use it.*

*Selena: Okay. What difficulties did you have in planning the trip or making the trip?*

*Male: So far, none. It's actually been a great trip. I'm very happy with from driving up here to getting around and everything that's up here to see and do and places to eat. It's been great. We're really happy.*

*Selena: Okay. What other information or resources would you like to have available that maybe aren't or that you weren't aware of. You mentioned that maybe you'd like to have a list of local restaurants.*

*Male: Right. The restaurants with the prices. Other than that, I'd say you can find out just about anything you want to. It's pretty good.*

This couple had planned fairly thoroughly. They used maps, guidebooks, and the Internet, and would use local information as well. Like most tourists, they found the information radio station not very useful. And they encountered no traffic problems once they left Phoenix.

Another traveler illustrated how she used the Internet from a distance to get a "big picture" view of northern Arizona, but she also booked her hotel room via the Web:

*Selena: What I'd like to know is how did you decide to take this trip and how did you plan the trip?*

*Female: Well, keeping always in mind money, I just tried to decide well, I wanted to go the Grand Canyon because I've never seen it before. I have a computer (AOL) so I went in to try to find an inexpensive flight, and I looked to find everything I could on Arizona and all that. Then, I booked my hotel room in advance again through AOL. It offered like a free night anywhere, so I decided to take advantage of that here.*

*Selena: Okay, you talked about using AOL. What sites did you visit on the Internet?*

*Female: Just everything about Flagstaff. You know, maps about where the different cities were. I tried to look at the most advantageous place to stay so that I could kind of branch out and see like the Grand Canyon and some of the other sights that I was interested in seeing. I came to Flagstaff because it looked like it was pretty much centrally located.*

Our use of illustrations from interviews in northern Arizona does not indicate that Branson was without *modern travelers*. Several Branson tourists – usually younger than the mean age of our respondents – had used the Internet to locate shows or lodging or both. This was certainly less common in Branson than at the Grand Canyon, however. The reasons probably are a combination of factors. The median and mean ages of the Branson visitors are clearly much higher than those of northern Arizona tourists, and advancing age continues to be negatively associated with Internet use. The Branson tourist comes from a closer point of origin, making

the total trip less urgent from a planning perspective. And more of the focus group respondents in Branson were making repeat trips than tourists in northern Arizona. All of these things probably contributed to the lower incidence of use of the Internet among the Branson tourists participating in the focus groups.

However, the fact that some did use it suggests that as reliance on the Internet spreads, it will become a more important information tool for Branson as it already is for northern Arizona.

Although the *Modern Traveler* uses the web to plan, only two travelers found the website developed for this application of ITS. It would be necessary for people to find and access the site more easily for it to have any impact. As it is, it had none at all on the travelers interviewed, even among those who want to use such sites.

The traffic elements of the Branson site are particularly sophisticated. Yet they had absolutely no direct impact on the traveler because the site was not accessible via kiosks. Traffic reports on the web would be difficult to use unless carried a laptop on vacation or there were a large screen computer system in the hotel lobby. The former was unlikely among the kind of traveler who visits Branson. The latter might eventually occur if hotels will accept placement of kiosks.

Access to the traffic management web site (see figure 3) via the Castle Rock kiosks, which by their nature can handle only one viewer at a time would probably not have a major impact on traffic unless there were many installed at each location, or unless one were installed with a large screen for multiple viewing. But this would compromise the financial arrangements of the kiosks. The concept of the kiosk is that it should be self-supporting by providing paid commercial uses as well as free access to the MDOT and ADOT websites. However, a kiosk needs to gross several hundred dollars a month to reach break-even. Diluting the earnings by multiplying the number of kiosks or by making them visible to multiple users and thus making conduct of private email transactions unlikely would not appear realistic. But without doing so, it appears highly unlikely that they can have much impact on mobility or access, or ultimately on congestion.

**Nomadic vacationer.** A typical *non-planner* travel party was represented by a father and daughter from California who were passing through Arizona and chose to stop briefly at Branson for a show or two. He is a truck driver. She was moving to the west coast. He was helping. They were moving her in his truck as a rare chance to travel together. Another travel party was an older couple in Branson who said they simply set out for a week in Branson with no reservations or show tickets, confident they would find both when they arrived. (They did.)

Distance tends to encourage planning because it raises the stakes of making a misstep. Middle class status and education tend to be associated with planning because they are associated with information seeking behaviors. However, a Dutch tourist demonstrated that there are exception to both these rules. She was a restorer of fine art at a museum in the Netherlands. An artist herself, with an adventurous view of travel, she wanted to “...see new things and to be surprised” at what she saw. She wanted to “see with her own eyes rather than through the eyes of others.” Therefore, she did not pre-plan her itinerary in detail. She did not worry about lack of accommodations. She regarded having no reservations as giving her freedom from restrictions if she wanted to linger in a location she found interesting, or digress entirely from the roughly defined set of destinations she had in mind. She chafed at the idea of having to maintain a schedule simply because she had reservations at the next city. Her planning tools? A map, money, a knowledge of English, an eye for signage advertising interesting sites, a willingness to talk with strangers, and hotel lobby brochure racks serve her well.

Like two other couples we interviewed, she also traveled without reservations because she, like the wives of the other couples was especially concerned about the cleanliness of bathrooms. Having no prior reservations gave her the freedom to select hotels with the certainty of seeing each hotel for herself before booking a room.

Neither the typical non-planners nor the less typical non-planning Dutch tourist had tourist destination plans beyond that day except in the sense of a general direction of travel, and a rough time-line. Neither needed long distance planning aids. Both would use local information sources. Both relied on brochures in hotel lobbies and the advice of other tourists and hotel staff. None had experience with the Internet, and none had any interest in electronic information sources.

Typical of the minimal planning *nomadic vacationer* was this couple from Oklahoma interviewed by Selena Barlow:

*Selena: How did you decide how to come here in the first place, and how did you figure out how to get here?*

*Male: Well, we just decided "Let's go to Las Vegas" and that's how we started.*

*Female: We thought "Well, we're on our way. We're going to see the Petrified Forest, Painted Desert, Grand Canyon, and then we came back from the Grand Canyon to Williams and drove on to Las Vegas. We left Las Vegas and decided to go to Laughlin (sp?). We'd heard about it, but we'd never been there.*

*Selena: How did you know about all of those places?*

*Female: Word of mouth.*

*Selena: Just word of mouth? Okay. How did you figure how to get to them leaving from Oklahoma?*

*Female: Atlas*

*Selena: You had an atlas? Okay. Anything else?*

*Female: Well, just jump in the car and go!*

*Selena: How long has your trip been?*

*Female: We left last Friday.*

*Male: A week ago today.*

*Selena: Okay.*

*Female: Is today Friday?*

*Male: Oh, is this Thursday? Or is this Friday?*

*Selena: Oh, okay. Well, there are some specific things I'd like to talk to you about. Did you have any trouble with directions, with locating the best route to get here? Did you have to stop and ask directions or get lost?*

*Female: Yes. We did as we came into Flagstaff. We saw a sign, and we were going to stop off and get gas, weren't we? And then we couldn't find our way back!*

*Selena: Oh, couldn't find your way back to the freeway?*

*Female: Yes. And we did have one little problem. One of the maps we got...*

*Male: Yes, it showed Highway 18 we thought...*

*Female: See, we had planned to go another way on this little map we had on a brochure. I don't remember. It's in the car somewhere. It showed we could go to the Grand Canyon and then as we were there, we'd go a little ways and come back on Highway 18 and go to from on 18 into Kingland. And there is no such way. We found out after we drove late up to the Grand Canyon.*

*Male: I forget which map that was on.*

*Female: It was one that Camilla gave us.*

*Male: Oh, yea.*

*Selena: So, it was a brochure that you got from a friend?*

*Female: Yes, they had just been up here I guess last year. And then we found that out after we got to the Grand Canyon and we stopped and kind of asked where we were going and they said "There is no way out of the Grand Canyon except this way!"*

*Selena: Okay, so you got directions from the people that work at the Grand Canyon?*

*Male: Yes.*

*Female: Right. So that caused us to spend the night up there.*

*Selena: Okay. How did you decide where to stay during the trip? Did you make reservations or did you just...*

*Male: We just had to stay where we could, really.*

*Selena: So, for the whole trip you just kind of found places to stay after you got there?*

*Male: We didn't make any reservations because we didn't know exactly where we were going to be.*

*Female: Because we wanted to stop along the way and we didn't have any specific itinerary as far as time limits and so forth.*

*Male: We didn't have to be back at a certain time.*

*Selena: Okay. Can you think of any kinds of information resources that you'd like to have for future trips? I mean, would you like to have more information ahead of time or do you kind of like doing it this way?*

*Female: Well, I don't know.*

*Male: I don't know that there's any additional information that would've changed our trip any.*

This couple was as low-tech and as little interested in travel planning as any we encountered. Even their "map" was only a schematic in a brochure. Their primary source of information was word of mouth. They had no reservations.

One might suppose that in Branson the necessity of buying tickets to shows would render planning essential. Yet it was surprising that many travelers arrived in Branson without much preparation, intending to find information once they were there. One rather uncommunicative couple illustrates the fact that some people travel with extremely little information:

*Selena: How did you decide to come here?*

*Male: Hearing everyone talk about it.*

*Selena: Okay. So, you drove from Kansas? How did you plan the route to get here?*

*Female: I asked a relative which way they came.*

*Selena: Did you have a map or...?*

*Male: Atlas*

*Selena: But you didn't call AAA and get a triptik or anything like that?*

*Female: No*

*Selena: How did you decide to stay here at the Roadway Inn?*

*Male: Coupon in a book she got from Shoney's.*

*Selena: Okay. How long are you staying for?*

*Female: Until Sunday.*

*Selena: Just tomorrow?*

*Female: Yes*

*Selena: Are you going to go see some shows while you're here then?*

*Female: Yes, we just haven't decided what yet.*

*Selena: So you're going to decide today and go get your tickets?*

*Male: Yes*

*Selena: So how will you decide what to go see?*

*Female: What looks interesting.*

*Selena: I mean, will you use these brochures or do you have a book or..?*

*Female: Well, we've looked in all of them (local guides) and we're still having trouble deciding.*

*Selena: How has the traffic seemed?*

*Female: It was good.*

*Male: There was hardly any traffic.*

*Selena: Once you got here, did you have any trouble finding your way here to the Roadway.*

*Female: Not really.*

*Male: We stopped at a convenience store and a tour guide of some kind told me exactly how to get here.*

*Selena: Did you see any of the variable message signs, the big electronic signs along the freeway that tell you about road conditions or what to expect ahead?*

*Male: No*

*Selena: Okay. How about the targeted radio stations that you can tune into to get traffic information? Did you see any signs along the highway that told you about those?*

*Male: No*

*Female: Most of the trip we were on Rt 400, then to 96 then 39 then 248.*

*Selena: Once you got into Branson, did you see any signs that said "red route", "blue route", "yellow route"?*

*Male: No*

Besides being rather reticent, this couple too, relied on very low tech sources and an unplanned approach to travel. They are unlikely users of any form of ITS except perhaps VMS.

**Traditional auto traveler.** The traditional auto traveler plans, but does so using traditional methods – word of mouth guide books, maps, and perhaps toll free numbers, but not the Internet. One such couple was interviewed by Hugh Clark in Branson.

*Hugh: How did you get the information about Shoji? (Note: "Shoji" is a violinist who performs in his own theater in a major Vegas style show in Branson.)*

*Female: We just heard everyone. We're from around the Kansas City area and everyone said that was the one to see. We lucked out. We got one of the few last seats. We were going to the 8:00 one. They were packed. There are a lot of shows I'd like to see.*

*Hugh: Do you do any other kind of traveling?*

*Female: Oh yes. San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York..*

*Male: We went to New York last fall.*

*Hugh: When you do that, do you drive or fly?*

*Male: We flew to New York. The year before that, we drove to Minneapolis, St. Paul to Mall of America and went on up to Lake Superior.*

*Hugh: So, when you do those kinds of trips, do you get a travel agent to plan it for you or do you plan it yourself?*

*Male: Usually plan it ourselves.*

*Hugh: When you plan it yourself, do you use computer Internet stuff or do you use guide books and maps?*

*Male: We use maps and guide books. We don't have a computer. We're computer illiterate.*

An example of the traditional low-tech traveler who uses a travel agent and who has little travel autonomy (i.e., low self-planning) is a British couple. Their exchanges with Hugh Clark follow:

*Hugh: Please start by telling me how you decided to come to Arizona and how you went about planning your trip to get here.*

*Male: Well, basically we had an anniversary we wanted to celebrate this year. We wanted somewhere special and a little bit different to go to. The Grand Canyon is one place that we thought of. So, we actually booked a trip through the airline, British Airways, which basically includes planning a route for us and booking our accommodations. And that's basically it. We've done a tour down to Yosemite, Las Vegas, now the Grand Canyon. We have stops in between at Salt Lake City. Then we're on to Yellowstone Park. Then, we have a trip back to San Francisco. That's a 3-week period.*

*Hugh: So, they planned your driving route?*

*Male: Well, we actually wanted to drive. We felt that by having the trip planned and incorporating in areas that we wanted to do, it would save us time. They've actually given us a very good route that we have followed up to now which has been successful.*

*Hugh: So, did they give you maps?*

*Female: Various maps and a complete itinerary. They told us exactly where to go and where to stop on route.*

*Hugh: You didn't really have to do very much once you talked to them.*

*Male: The only thing we've done is obviously like today, for example, we go on to Lake Powell where we are booked for 2 nights at Big Western. But, we can either go straight there or spend more time here and arrive there late. It's tiring, but...*

*Hugh: But you get to see a lot!*

*Female: Actually, this is a 3000-mile trip.*

*Hugh: You selected British Airways, and they did everything. But, you told them where you wanted to go.*

*Male: Not every single place. We didn't choose everywhere. We'd never even heard of Yosemite, and we loved it. So, we would've missed that if we hadn't done that package.*

*Female: Yosemite sticks in my mind more than any other place so far.*

*Male: We haven't been to the Grand Canyon yet.*

*Hugh: The places that you did tell them, how did you know about those places or how did you identify them?*

*Female: Everybody back home knows about the Grand Canyon.*

*Male: Yellowstone Park, everybody knows about.*

*Female: We have friends who've been to Yellowstone.*

*Male: So, really the tours evolved to include those two places.*

*Female: I think that we're both hoping that we can single out one place and, at a later date, come back because obviously two days in one place isn't long enough. I could've stayed a week at Yosemite. It was beautiful. I'm sure the Grand Canyon we could spend a lot longer. We've only got one night here.*

*Hugh: So, you'll go to the Grand Canyon and then head out from here?*

*Male: To Lake Powell. It's our next stop.*

*Hugh: Did you call any 800 numbers to get information about Arizona or any other areas that you're going to, or did they pretty much provide everything that you needed.*

*Male: They provided some maps. We've picked information up at hotels or lodges that we stayed at. We didn't contact anyone. We were given books before we left from people we knew who had been so we could skim through those.*

*Hugh: Are either of you on the computer? Do you use the Internet?*

*Female: No.*

Clearly the traditional auto traveler is a declining group. All of the travelers in this group were aware of the potential of the Internet to be used for travel planning. However, they do not use it at the present time simply because they are very uninformed about computers and communications via computer systems.

## ***The importance of travel style to ITS***

Every market has segments that respond to services or products in differing ways. The "market" for ITS is no exception. The differing impact of information systems on traveler segments defined by what we have called their "travel styles" is important for this reason.

For those who come from a distance and plan ahead, the need is for accurate sources of information about a destination readily available at a great distance. At the early planning stage of their trips, they are less interested in ancillary features such as minor tourist sites than they are with making in-country travel arrangements, finding the best routes, and certain lodging at the main attractions. They are also interested in the reliability of the reservations systems, specifically the certainty that their reservations have been confirmed.

Those who do not plan, because (as the Dutch artist put it), "*...planning ahead denies you freedom. You can't just stop and explore if you want to. You have to get to the next hotel,*" value information at and near the destination. They need little information beforehand except a map. However, near the major destinations such as the Grand Canyon or Branson, they need to know about lodging. And once lodged, they want to know all there is to know about ancillary local attractions. To get this information, they use the concierge, tourist information stands,

brochure stands in hotel lobbies, and tourist publicity television programs that run in local hotels.

Both the modern and the traditional travelers are planners. Planning is, however, not inherently is, however, not exclusively high or low tech. The high-tech information seeker, at least at present, seeks information in multiple ways, not replacing guidebooks with the Internet, but supplementing them. It was clear from their remarks that what they seek is the certainty that multiple sources offer. For example, they would often use the Internet to seek out sites and hotels, then use a guidebook for further information on the sites and an 800 number to reserve the hotel room.

This is important because it suggests that information-hungry pre-planning “modern travelers” will use ITS systems most heavily if they complement printed information resources. For the “modern traveler” segment, this might mean joint ventures with guide-books, or linkages to their web sites. For spreading the technology to the “traditional auto-traveler,” it might mean such things as placing links on the AAA trip-planning CD-Rom, and on the AAA website, as well as highlighting the location of kiosks in trip-tiks. For the non-planner, it might mean placing road-sign indicators of tourism information sites with kiosks offering hotel reservations -- if, or when this group becomes accustomed to that kind of technology.

All of these are tactics to promote the larger strategy of speeding the adoption of the ITS innovation.

## ***Exceptions to the rule***

Market segments are indications of tendencies, and are never pure types. A regional traveler from Yuma (AZ) who brought along her husband on a business trip for her company was mixing business with recreation and illustrates an example of a mix of styles, as well as illustrating the use or non-use of ITS components:

*Selena: Tell me about your trip and how you planned it. Where'd you start from, how'd you decide to come here and how did you figure out how to get here?*

*Female: Okay. I'm actually on a business trip from Yuma. They told me I needed to go to Flagstaff so I looked at a map and figured it out. This is the second time I've been up here on business. The first time I went up here through basically the back roads. The second time I came up the main highways. I was trying to see a little bit different country both times.*

*Selena: Where did you get the map you used?*

*Female: It was in a road atlas.*

*Selena: So that was the only information you used for actually driving up here then?*

*Female: I stopped at a couple of scenic spots on the way up when we saw the signs.*

*Selena: Did you have in mind when you left Yuma any particular scenic spots that you wanted to stop at?*

*Female: Usually I just like to get in the car and drive and see where we end up.*

*Selena: How did you decide where you wanted to stay when you got up here?*

*Female: It was the company. They told me where I was staying. Last time, I was at the La Quinta. This time it is the Day's Inn. It depends on where they can get rooms and who they have contracts with.*

*Selena: Okay. Are you going to do sightseeing while you're up here?*

*Female: We're going to sightsee on the way back to Yuma. We're going to go down the back roads through Prescott. We came through, and it was dark by the time we got to Northern Arizona. We would like to see it in daylight!*

*Selena: Do you have some particular places in mind that you want to stop?*

*Female: We want to goof around in Prescott for awhile. There's a really winding road that we came up through Prescott and we'd like to go see it. There were some really gorgeous views and places to pull off.*

*Selena: And you know about these from the last time that you drove up?*

*Female: Yes. We were just hitting it at sunset, and we couldn't pull over. There was just too much traffic.*

*Selena: Before you made this trip, did you call any 800 number to get information about the area or anything?*

*Female: No*

*Selena: Are you on the Internet? Do you use the Internet at work or at home?*

*Female: At work.*

*Selena: Did you use the Internet to get any information for the trip?*

*Female: All I had to do was call Corporate and say "where do you want me to go and how do you want me to get there and where am I staying when I do get there?"*

*Selena: Have you used the Internet in the past as a trip-planning tool for vacations and things?*

*Female: Yes. For airline reservations and things like that.*

*Selena: For anything else?*

*Female: Not really. I knew the area I was going to so...*

*Selena: During the course of this trip when you stopped at rest stops or anything, have you seen any electronic kiosks that gave you information?*

*Female: No. We seemed to hit a couple of the rest areas when they were closed for repair or something.*

*Selena: How about the big electronic variable message signs along the highway. Did you see any along the way?*

*Female: Only in construction areas.*

This woman is an Internet user whose other remarks (not quoted here) made it clear she is normally a pre-planner. But on this trip she relied on others and planned ahead very little. The travel styles defining the travel segments are intended only to describe general tendencies which may have bearing on the uses of the kinds of information included in the ITS programs.

## ***ITS components travelers used or failed to use***

**Radio: Travelers did not use the ITS radio with any regularity.** Local radio information was broadcast in both rural ITS test sites on the typical am information bands. At both sites, travelers interviewed in the focus groups tended to be aware of this information sources. However, at both sites they found it not useful for the same reasons. First they had reception problems. The stations are difficult to bring in. In Branson, for example, if one enters from the Springfield, there is a sign indicating that the radio signal is available as one drives south and nears Branson. Yet experimenting with this we found it often not to be available either because apparently it does not broadcast continuously, or because weather or physical conditions interfered. Tourists in the focus groups reported the same problem. Moreover, if they had received it, they often found the signal weak and distorted.

Within the city of Branson itself, as well as inside the Park at the Grand Canyon, tourists indicated they did receive the radio signal. However, once they had heard it, or some of it, they said they tuned it out since it tended to be repetitious or poor in reception. Therefore it fails to serve them as a source of traffic updates. Several travelers indicated that in Branson the local commercial radio station was much more effective when it broadcast weather and traffic information since it also played music and they stayed tuned to it.

Nevertheless, one couple traveling in Branson said they had heard about a road closure on the radio system and had taken the alternate route suggested. Another traveler (at the Grand Canyon) said he and his wife had heard a weather bulletin on the radio which had warned them of a thunderstorm. They had taken no action as a result, but were aware that they would encounter the storm.

These problems are not unique to the Branson and northern Arizona radio signals. In other tourism studies, and from personal experience, the author knows that these radio signals are often difficult to receive, and that tourists often consider them of limited value for updates because they are regarded as one-time messages, not a source of updates.

One tourist in Branson illustrated the fact that radio can have utility for the traveler, though it does not give the whole picture:

*Selena: Did you notice any signs along 65 that told you to tune in to a radio station?*

*Male: Yes, I did, and I tuned it in.*

*Selena: Okay, did you get any information from it?*

*Male: Yes. It was telling me a little bit about those roads and about the blue and red and yellow.*

*Selena: Okay. So that was where you got your first notion that there was something different about Branson streets now compared to your last visit?*

*Male: Yes. It's been long enough since I've been down that route that I wasn't exactly sure where the Shepherd of the Hills Expressway was. I knew it was before you got into town, but I didn't know how far it was from town. The radio helped.*

This traveler learned from the radio about the color codes, though he later indicated he was not quite sure what the codes meant. His first challenge on entering Branson was not utilizing the symbols, but orienting himself to the town. Once there, of course, his information needs changed, and he quickly understood the nature of the color codes from a map provided by the hotel. Thus the radio station had not resolved any immediate problem. But it did initially alert

him to the existence of a new traffic management system in place since his previous visit. Coupled with the coded map he got later, this was helpful information to him, and increased his mobility within Branson.

**Color codes in Branson: Color codes were somewhat effective.** One of the systems tourists found most useful was the color coding of Branson's streets. Though Branson is small, its roadways can be confusing because they are somewhat circular. This means that a tourist can get to any destination by various circuitous routes. Under certain traffic conditions, the fastest route is often not the most direct route. For the newcomer the alternate routes to follow are by no means self-evident. The color codes on the streets help a great deal, and generated considerable favorable comment from Branson tourists. The fact that they were represented on the local attraction maps made them still more useful.

Many of the Branson tourists commented that the color codes were helpful, and had reduced congestion since their previous visits to Branson.

One problem people had with them was the fact that they were painted on the street and not visible unless one looked down. In heavy traffic and in rainy weather this might mean that one could not see the markings very well. Several older tourists in their seventies who were short, and who may well have had difficulty seeing pavement close to the front of their vehicles, commented on this. Color coding on colorful and decorative roadside flags mounted on light poles or bridge rails might inoffensively serve the purpose of making the coding more visible.

A very significant problem for several tourists in Branson was simply getting oriented to basic directions. There are no large visual cues in Branson. One tourist said, "*At home (i.e., St. Louis) you always have the river and you can tell where you are headed because of the Arch and because you just know where the river is. In Branson, you can't tell if you are going north, south, east, or west.*" Her husband jokingly suggested erecting a tower at one end of town as a visual cue much like the "Magic Kingdom" castle provides in Disney World. When several other tourists reported the same sense of disorientation, they were asked whether a large visual cue like a tower or tethered balloon would help them orient themselves. They felt it would.

Whatever the solution may be, this sense of disorientation was clearly the primary reason tourists reported for becoming lost in Branson. They literally did not know which way to turn when leaving their hotel or in leaving a show. And in severe traffic conditions making a mistake such as that could cost them a great deal of time before they could successfully change course.

The color coding was clearly the most successful aspect of the ITS as implemented in Branson in terms of its direct impact on tourists. used by quite a few of the Branson tourists to whom we spoke. However, a roughly equal number failed to use it. They failed to do so because they were initially unaware of it, or because it did not help them with their most critical problem – a basic lack of sense of local direction. A Branson couple provides an example:

*Hugh: How was traffic when you arrived in Branson?*

*Male: Very congested going West.*

*Hugh: Okay. So, did you switch roads to avoid that congestion and get around it or did you just stay and stick with it?*

*Male: We tried and got lost.*

*Female: And I'm not much help at navigating!*

*Male: We went down and we wanted to stay. We finally decided that we wanted to go to this one particular show, the Shoji Show. We turned, I had read ... it was a Holiday Inn Crown Plaza, which we'd never saw. It was supposed to be a ten-story building down around the Andy Williams Palace. I never saw it.*

*Hugh: Okay. So you couldn't find a landmark?*

*Male: Couldn't find the landmark we read about. So, we went down on one of the loops south of 76. It was 176 or Green Mountain Road. We went into a hotel there, real nice hotel, and the people were very nice there. By this time, we decided we wanted to see Shoji for some reason. They said "Well, you go this road and you'll loop around and you'll come right out on 76...". We thought this was very good and very helpful. We were tired of driving and we wanted to go someplace to check in and then walk to the show, which we eventually did. But, we got a little lost coming over here. I guess I didn't pay too much attention. Last night, the desk clerk told us you go off 76 South down between the Branch House and everything and there's a bunch of new motels down there. And then there's this road which we thought we was supposed to go which had this new pasta restaurant. According to her, we was supposed to loop around and come in here. Well, anyway, we came up too soon and turned wrong and ended up in congestion. It wasn't too big an ordeal. But last night, we decided to go back to the pasta restaurant and went back the way we thought. We were way out in the country! We left the strip and the bright lights and went way out there!*

*Hugh: So, it was a matter of figuring out north, south, east and west. I mean, you weren't quite sure which direction to go.*

*Male: Yes. We wanted to loop back east, and we went south. The map she had was printed out showing the shows, but I don't think it was completely accurate as far as north, south, east and west.*

*Hugh: Have you noticed the color code designators? The red route, blue route, and yellow route?*

*Male: Oh, the lane? Yes, but I didn't know what they were. Now that you mention it, yes. What are they for?*

*HC: They code the routes (Shows map) so you can follow the dots. You can see on the map how the color coded routes come together.*

*Male: Oh that's great!*

Here we have another example of a traveling party becoming disoriented but being unable to use the color codes, local maps, or a sense of direction to resolve the problem. The color codes and map would have helped if he had understood the codes. More visible publicity would correct this.

These illustrations are not intended to diminish the effectiveness of the color codes or to suggest that traveler disorientation is prevalent. Those tourists who were aware of the color codes and their purpose found them quite useful. In fact, based on all the interviews, we regard the color codes as the single most effective aspect of the ITS system in place during the weekends of the interviews in terms of its direct effect on traveler mobility. Moreover, many tourists returning after an absence of two or more years from Branson commented that traffic seemed much better now, perhaps, they said, because of the new roadways and the color coding.

The illustrations are intended to show only that there is a problem becoming disoriented in this small city, and that without close coordination between the color coding, information on how to use it, clear maps with consistent scales and graphics which accurately represent the roadways, and perhaps some type of sight-line for orientation, there are continuing problems with people becoming lost.

**VMS: High awareness, low utilization.** There was high awareness of variable message signs among tourists in the focus groups. However, there were no experiences of diverting routes or changing behavior in any way because of them. Instead, people found them useful because they were confirming or explanatory. For example, they would warn of construction ahead, thus explaining slow traffic.

Asked if they would have taken alternate routes if the VMS had suggested it, tourists traveling from a distance tended to say they would not do so. The reason, they said, was that they knew they would be slowed by traffic difficulties, but they would not be stopped. Their maps and other information in both FOT's had very limited alternatives in any event, and they were concerned that taking a detour would take a great deal of time and introduce uncertainties they would otherwise not face. Better to have slow but certain travel than faster but uncertain travel.

Nevertheless, the VMS systems were regarded as useful because they provide concrete information about specific conditions, removing uncertainties about why traffic was moving slowly, for example.

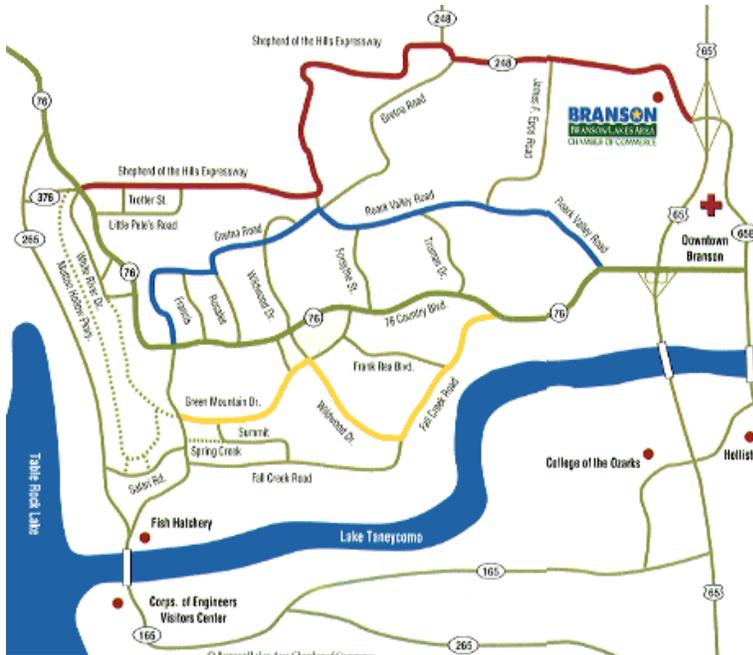
**Kiosks: Non-functioning, but potentially valuable.** Kiosks were not effectively in place in either Branson or the Flagstaff/Grand Canyon area at the time of the study. However, kiosks seem to hold considerable potential given the information needs and habits of the focus group participants.

The only point we would make here is that the kiosks are an inherently local source of information. The several travel-style segments all converge on a local area and all seek information there. Thus the kiosk can play a significant role in providing local traveler information on traffic, weather, and site information. When shown printed mock-ups of the kiosk screens, or allowed to experiment on a lap-top with the websites accessed via the kiosks, tourists -- especially *Modern Travelers*, but also some *Traditional Automobile Travelers* tended to like the concept of fingertip information continually updated.

The central problem with the kiosk system at the time of the focus groups and survey was that they were not reliably operational at enough locations to be seen by tourists. In fact no one in the focus groups had seen one although one was operational in Branson (at an out-of-the-way telephone information center) and two were operational in the northern Arizona (at the Flagstaff Visitor Center<sup>4</sup> and the local KOA campground). A second problem was that the kiosks themselves looked more like ATM machines and were not approached by many tourists.

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<sup>4</sup> On the weekend of the focus groups and survey the Visitor Center kiosk had been shut down because of system failure. Service was not restored until after the survey weekend. Subsequently interviews were conducted there several weeks later after the kiosk was brought back on line.



**Figure 2** Branson Chamber of Commerce website map from “Branson.com” website

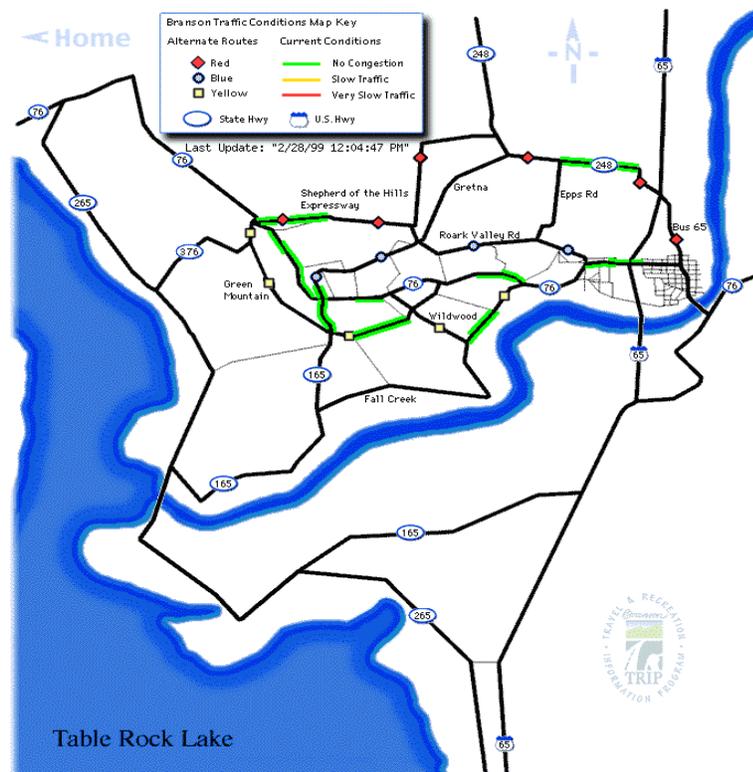
**Websites: Not found by travelers, but well liked in interviews.**

The websites (Arizona.tripusa and Branson.tripusa) may have been found by two, but only two, of the tourists we spoke with. Both were visitors to northern Arizona. The lack of awareness of the sites was not surprising, given that the implementation was in its early stages and had not been publicized widely to tourists.

Why did tourists using the Internet not find the sites? People using the Internet tend to use one of two search styles to find information. Either they use a search engine, or they enter logical place names as URL’s to try to find a site. Neither strategy readily brings a browser to the DOT sites. Entering

Branson.com brings up the Chamber of Commerce page which does not link to the DOT traffic map. Instead it links to the map shown above.

The DOT map, in contrast, shows current traffic conditions as shown on the insert copy of the



Branson.tripusa.com website map. (See inset below. It shows green highlights indicating free flowing traffic. Yellow and red highlights indicate slow or stopped traffic.)

Similarly, trying the URL “grandcanyon.com” brings the user to the local Chamber of Commerce site which, however useful itself, does not link to the Arizona.tripusa site (or did not at the time of the study). Similarly, searches on Yahoo and Excite for Branson or Grand Canyon did not bring the web-surfer to the tripusa sites.

As a result, when we asked “modern traveler” tourists how they had gone about finding information on the Internet about the Grand Canyon, only two reported having found a site that we believe (from their descriptions) may have been the

**Figure 3** Map showing current traffic conditions available on Branson.tripusa website.

ADOT site. Most found the Chamber of Commerce or other area-related sites instead. And they found them useful.

Most travelers searching the web also think in terms of specific destinations, not states. Thus they search for Branson or the Grand Canyon, and not for Missouri or Arizona. One traveler, for example said that he learned that air fares to Las Vegas were kept quite low. As a result he flew there and drove to the Grand Canyon. But for routing information, he had searched for Las Vegas and the Grand Canyon, not for Nevada and Arizona.

Another northern Arizona traveler who used the Internet intensively in planning her trip illustrates how she searched in a way that would not bring up traffic sites. She was apparently searching for hotel and airline reservation sites:

*Selena: Okay, when you were on AOL, do you remember going to a site that was specifically about Northern Arizona called Arizona.tripusa?*

*Female: I don't really recall that. I do remember going to a site that advertised some really good rates for travel, your hotel, flight and everything. When I actually called the phone number, they said it was a mistake. It wasn't supposed to be on the computer. I can't remember what site it was. I went to so many.*

*Selena: You just used a search?*

*Female: Yes*

*Selena: Do you remember what you searched for?*

*Female: Well, I was looking at things like The Painted Desert, all the different sights that Arizona had listed as attractions in my guide book. So I searched for every one of those to see what I could find, to see what it looked like and stuff like that. Then I searched for hotels in the area and pulled up prices and accommodations and that kind of thing. Then trying to find out, because I was going to fly, trying to find a place at really good rate from where I lived to Arizona.*

*Selena: Would you say the information that you found on the web influenced which attractions you decided to go to?*

*Female: Somewhat, because of some of the pictures that they showed I thought "I've really got to see that," so yes, that did it.*

*Selena: And it obviously influenced the hotels that you selected and how you traveled here.*

*Female: Right.*

*Selena: Did you use any other information sources? Did you call any toll-free numbers to get information?*

*Female: For Arizona? No I didn't. No. Not the Chamber of Commerce or anything.*

One traveler illustrates some of the ways people use the Internet, and the challenge of making one's website visible to them:

*Selena: Did you have any difficulties using the Internet to get information?*

*Female: Not really except that it was kind of hard to find a site that had...I finally found it. It was kind of difficult finding it. It was a map that showed all the cities in Arizona. Then it showed the distance from all the cities. It was there, but I had to dig and dig and dig and find it. Then I didn't put in a bookmark, and I couldn't find it again.*

One reason many people did not seek information from the websites or the kiosks (which contain the website) was simply that it did not occur to them to look. One Branson traveler, exceptional because he was relatively young, illustrates the fact that most people simply did not

know about either the website or the associated kiosks. Yet some travelers would use them if they were aware of them:

*Selena: Another element of the project is an Internet site where you can get information about roads and travel conditions and everything. Are you on the Internet? Do you use a computer?*

*Male: Yes.*

*Selena: Did you use it at all to get information about Branson?*

*Male: No, I didn't realize they had a site on there.*

*Selena: Have you used the Internet in the past for any kind of travel planning?*

*Male: Yes. I've been looking things up for National Parks. We're thinking about going out west this fall sometime.*

*Selena: One other aspect of the project is that the Internet site is being tied into these kiosks. They are just beginning to place them at different visitors' centers. They are little touch screen kiosks where you can go up and get information about traffic conditions and congestion.*

*Male: I've heard about those, but I haven't seen any of them.*

*Selena: Okay. How did you hear of them?*

*Male: A woman I work with had gone to something in Springfield just a couple of weeks ago. She said they had those like in the malls and different places up in Springfield. That's the first time I had heard of them.*

*Selena: If there were something like that say in this room or in a hotel lobby, do you think that's something that you would use as an information source?*

*Male: Yes.*

The use of the website may grow with time if it is publicized and appropriately linked to other sites and registered with search engines. If so, it will grow because the "modern traveler" segment is interested in maximizing their information about destinations, and because at the destination, all segments will be interested in up to the minute information on traffic and weather, as well as secondary sites as these become easily accessible on hotel web-tv or on well-placed kiosks

Although the website and kiosks were unknown to most visitors interviewed, they were shown the website, either in printed form (several pages were printed out in color for the interviews) or on a laptop. One reason for optimism that the site and kiosks will ultimately prove useful is that the tourists liked the information and indicated they would find it quite useful. It is interesting to note that they were least interested in traffic information. They were more interested in restaurants, hotels, and, at the Grand Canyon, the weather.

Although the websites specific to the test were typically not used by the tourists interviewed, many did use the Internet. They looked up city names, destination names, and hotel chains. Often the hotel chains would provide ancillary services guiding guests to local attractions. In Branson, one couple reported finding the Internet site for best Western Hotels, finding the Branson hotel, and then accessing a ticket broker for Branson shows. They purchased tickets through that broker. This kind of experience is convincing evidence that the Internet is a powerful planning tool which is likely to have a positive effect on traffic by making some transactions possible without local travel within the impacted area, in this case Branson.

**Toll free traffic condition number: Too new to be known.** Perhaps because they were not especially concerned with traffic conditions, and because the system was very new and unpublicized at the time, no travelers interviewed in the focus groups reported having called the toll-free traffic information number in Branson. This does not mean that in that period no one called. But no one in travel parties randomly selected for focus group interviews had called. One man commented as follows about the telephone traffic information system in Branson:

*Selena: One other aspect of the project that they've just started up is a telephone number that you can call when you're here in Branson, and it'll tell you about traffic conditions and you can punch in where you are and where you want to go to and it'll tell you which of the routes is best to take, you know - yellow, blue, red. Is that something you think you'd ever use?*

*Male: If it was handy. I mean if it was something I didn't have to ask somebody about or look around for and I knew about, I would probably use it.*

## Conclusions

In an evaluative study, it is important to say that effective implementation of ITS had not been achieved in any meaningful degree at either test site at the time of the interviews. However, the interviews were conducted just as systems were coming on line. In the minds of travelers, some aspects of the systems hold some promise. The challenge is to make the ITS relevant to the travel planning and information seeking styles of the traveling public in ways not now characteristic of major elements of the ITS installations – not in the website, not in the kiosks, not in the radio stations. Yet all have potential.

Travelers have various styles of travel. Some rely on planning ahead, others do not. Some collect detailed information, others do not. Some rely on high-tech devices. Other rely on low-tech sources. However, the market segments we have dubbed the *Modern Traveler*, and the *Traditional Automobile Traveler*, would be users of certain elements of well publicized and well executed ITS components. The problem is to achieve implementation that effectively reaches the traveler because it is designed with the traveler in mind.

Most of those who extensively pre-plan their travel used guide books even if they also used the Internet. The US Citizens mentioned the usual sources such as Rand McNally and AAA. The Europeans mentioned the Rough Guide (apparently a tourist guidebook to the American West) more than any other printed guide.

Toll-free numbers were a primary source of information and reservations for those who planned their own trips, especially from within the United States. This is to be expected of those who use guidebooks. But even many people who use the Internet for initial exploration of hotels, airlines, or tours, subsequently use a toll-free number to make specific arrangements. There is still a tendency not to trust that a web-based transaction will be completed. The confirmation of a direct conversation with an agent is still desired.

We are in a period of transition in which the Internet is diffusing through the culture as an innovation. Paper sources are easier to use, more familiar, are portable, and easily and continually accessible. It is more likely that the Internet will supplement rather than replace them. Similarly, the toll-free number system offers both familiarity and the ability to ask questions, obtain immediate answers, and alter requests on the fly. Just as important, one needs only a telephone and no skill to access them.

This means that the two Internet ITS components, kiosk and website, should be seen not as free-standing, but as part of a larger information picture which includes written materials and commercial toll free numbers. Development of a series of cross-references could be very useful.

## ***I-40 Corridor - Flagstaff and Grand Canyon.***

At the time of the interviews, the ITS system seemed to be in excellent condition on the input side (i.e., good, timely information from ADOT). Therefore, there is the potential to improve public safety and traffic management services. But at that time there appeared to be almost no direct impact at all on the consumer via kiosks, radio, telephone or Internet.

In the I40 corridor there are many opportunities to improve utilization of the existing ITS systems. To do so means making kiosks reliable more attractive, more visible, customer-friendly, and accessible at key locations in hotel lobbies and restaurants. Given the attitudes of local business people at the time of the interviews, and the nature of the commercial demands on the kiosks to be self-supporting, this appears very difficult to achieve.

An alternative means of providing information from the arizona.tripusa website to large numbers of travelers seems to be encouraging hotels to use it at the concierge or front desks. A second alternative would be to introduce web-tv in the lobbies with destinations, restaurant, traffic, and weather information available but not lodging. If this could be supported by a means other than kiosk use fees (e.g., hotel subsidy for the information service, in-house advertising on the site), it could become a significant information medium for all kinds of travelers look to the hotel lobby as a major information source.

The local am radio is rendered ineffective because people either cannot receive it or hear it once, then listen to other stations. The website is thought to be useful by those travelers to whom we showed it. But it was rarely found by the focus group participants because its state-orientation is contrary to the way in which people conceptualize their travel, and because search strategies do not bring up the site.

The traveling public is, however, clearly ready for this information as shown by their extensive use of the Internet, toll free numbers, and their awareness of VMS and radio signals.

## ***Branson***

Branson too showed little or no impact from any ITS component, although the unique local color coding was quite helpful to some travelers. The test interviews were conducted on a delayed schedule, but still were premature, for the ITS systems were either not in place (kiosks) or had not been in place long enough (Website, telephone traffic information) to have had any effect.

Like the situation in northern Arizona, however, the traveling public clearly is ready for more immediate information and can utilize it for travel decisions. It is also clear that from the tourists' perspective, things have improved greatly in terms of Branson traffic because of road construction and traffic management efforts having little to do with the specific ITS components (except color coding) but much to do with the overall MDOT efforts.

As in the I40 corridor, the interviews revealed little traveler awareness of ITS components. Yet in Branson too some of the systems show some promise – though with limits imposed by the demography of the travelers and the geography and roadways systems unique to Branson.

For example, in the focus group discussions, we noted (as expected) that the Internet was more appealing to the young and middle aged travelers than to older persons. Since a disproportionate number of Branson travelers are retired, this means that inherently, a computer based system is less appealing to the Branson tourist than to the Grand Canyon tourist.

Several ideas for further ITS improvement did emerge from the interviews:

- C Better signage to get explain the meaning of color codes and get people onto alternate routes. Especially on yellow, both ends. Colored trailblazer signs or flags along routes, in addition to markings on roadway. Especially, colored signs with arrows when a turn is required to stay on route.
- C Standardized map in digital version which can be customized by all map producers. Work with a group of users to develop map that meets various needs.
- C Have radio and hotel TV explain alternate route system and how to use it. Tell people where to pick up a map. (Possibly buy time on top commercial station for similar message).
- C Need "How to Drive in Branson" guide. More than a map...explain how to use map and other ITS tools to avoid traffic congestion. Send out with hotel confirmations and Chamber books.
- C Web site needs to include same "how to" info. The map alone doesn't mean much to someone who hasn't been to Branson before.
- C Website/Kiosk map needs to be zoomable and needs to include attractions in close-up view so that people will have visual landmarks to orient themselves.
- C Kiosk needs to be more attractive. Signage that says " Free Tourist Information. Check your E-mail with Paynet."rather than large Visa/MC symbols.
- C Use a large map display monitor rather than kiosk at high traffic locations.
- C Encourage hotels and visitor centers to provide desk clerks with access to website. They can use it to provide info to visitors...print out info as needed.
- C Pursue "Branding of Routes" so that travelers become accustomed to knowing the color code of their hotel and their local destination.
  - Signage where you get on alt route that lists major destinations (maybe just key theaters or well know landmarks)
  - Have brochure and website include a white pages listing of destinations (theaters, hotels, restaurants, shopping) by route.

In short, the primary apparent impact of the ITS projects at the time of the interviews was the operational impact on traffic management rather than a direct impact on tourists using these systems for their own ends. This study was not intended to examine the operational impacts on traffic management, however, but to examine it from the traveler's point of view. From that point of view the systems have potential, but the potential will take time and some system changed to realize.

# Appendix A: Illustrative Interview Notes

## ***Flagstaff Tourist Interviews***

### ***Older Couple from Oklahoma - No Planners***

- C Had a list of places they wanted to see: Petrified Forest, Grand Canyon, Painted Desert, Las Vegas and Laughlin. Places they had heard about from friends and family.
- C Use road atlas only to set out on one week trip.
- C No advance reservations, stopped when they got tired of driving and found a hotel. When they stop at a hotel they ask to see a room before checking in. Cleanliness is very important. (They noted that the rest stops in AZ and NM are dirty.)
- C Pick restaurants the same way...check out bathrooms before eating.
- C Not on Internet, did not call any 800 numbers, saw no kiosks.
- C Did see VMSs, but no influence on trip.
- C Coming into Flagstaff they stopped for gas and couldn't find way back to freeway (poor signage).
- C Had a brochure (gotten from a friend) which showed a map from Grand Canyon to Kingman on I-18. They couldn't find it and it turns out there's no such way. They got direction at the Grand Canyon, so ended up spending a night there.

### ***Young woman from East traveling alone - Self Planner/High Tech***

- C Began with desire to visit Grand Canyon.
- C Initiated planning on AOL. Began by looking for inexpensive airfare. Looked at everything she could find on Arizona.
- C Decided to take Greyhound so she could see things on the way - turned out to be a little rough but interesting. A travel agency gave her a list of prices for Grey Line tours to the Canyon...turns out they were wrong....actual prices were much higher.
- C Booked hotels on AOL. Took advantage of a free hotel night offer that they had.
- C Also used AOL to find attractions. Flagstaff was centrally located so took the Greyhound to there. (She would have preferred Williams, but was told they didn't go there. Turns out it's the next stop after Flagstaff.)]
- C One Internet site offered a great package deal that turned out to be a "mistake." She called to book and found out it wasn't available.
- C She didn't call any general 800#, just Greyhound.
- C Hasn't seen any kiosks, but looks at brochures wherever she goes.
- C In using Internet, she found it difficult to find sites with maps, cities and distances.
- C The Internet will be her starting point for travel planning in the future.

### ***30-something man, wife and baby from Phoenix - Self Planner/Mixed Tech***

- C Wanted to get away from Phoenix to cooler weather.
- C Got tour books from AAA and went on Internet.
- C Used tour books to decide where to stay.
- C Used Internet to identify secondary attractions, searched for Flagstaff and Grand Canyon.
- C Search Internet for local restaurants, inexpensive but not chains. Couldn't find much.
- C Didn't visit TripUSA site.
- C Saw VMSs but there was no message. Traffic wasn't heavy on Thursday.
- C Is aware of targeted radio stations but didn't use.
- C Considers Internet to be much better than conventional trip planning tools. Find information quicker and better. Without Internet, they wouldn't have know about

Historic Downtown Flagstaff, Cardinals practice at NAU or local history and art museums.

- C Made lodging reservations through travel agency. The tour books are good for accommodations because they rate hotels and give prices. Would use Internet for accommodations if complete info were available.
- C Would like more info about local restaurants, found everything else OK.
- C Had him use the TripUSA website. He is a web master at his work site. Thought the TripUSA site was very good and easy to use. Especially liked the list of hotels with links to info about each. Would still like a better list of Flagstaff restaurants.

***Woman from Yuma traveling with fiancé on business/pleasure trip - Travel broker***

- C Had to come here for business. Has been here before.
- C Used map in road atlas. Last time she took the back roads, this time they came by the freeway. On way up, stopped at a few scenic spots when they saw signs. They'll take the back roads back to do more sightseeing.
- C Her company determined where she would stay, hotel they have a contract with. She just called the corporate travel planner. For other personal trips she has used Internet for airline reservations.
- C Has not seen any kiosks, some rest areas were closed.
- C Saw some VMSs around construction zones. Did not change route...they weren't in any hurry.
- C Did not listen to targeted radio. Their radio doesn't work.
- C Selected restaurants based on drive by, word of mouth and book of menus at hotel.
- C Had her use the TripUSA website. She went to featured destination, restaurants and general info. She will be moving here for 3-6 months in near future and feels the website will be useful. "There's only so much info you can find by driving around." Felt the site was easy to use, "not a lot of chains to go through to get what you're looking for."

***Twenty-something man traveling with girlfriend from California to New Jersey - Minimal Planning***

- C He is driving his girlfriend from San Diego to New Jersey where he lives. Spending a night in Flagstaff to see Grand Canyon and a night in Sedona.
- C Had AAA prepare a TripTik.
- C Just picking hotels as they go. Stopped at another Flagstaff hotel that was full and they referred them to Days Inn.
- C Haven't had any problems with getting lost or directions. TripTik has provided good directions including a description of each city they pass through. Would have liked TripTik to include more info about attractions not directly on route.
- C Have picked restaurants by "brand name" as they drive. Might make an exception and try some local Mexican food in Flagstaff.
- C He is familiar with targeted radio stations but hasn't noticed any signs for them.
- C Isn't on Internet and hasn't seen any kiosks.
- C Would like reflectors on center lines of roads.
- C In past vacations with family they have made reservations...used AAA.

***Middle aged man traveling on business from North Carolina to California - Minimal Planning***

- C Look at Rand McNally map and picked shortest route.
- C Stops when he gets tired of driving and finds hotel that's "not too close to railroad tracks."
- C In other states, he has encountered major tie-ups on highway - a lot of road construction and accidents. Encountered half hour delays in NM and TX. Didn't try alternate route, was trapped on highway. Police were on site but weren't trying to speed up traffic. Had

no warning of tie-ups, no VMS. Thought it would be a great idea to put them ahead of construction zones...has seen in cities.

C Saw signage about targeted radio stations, but couldn't find station, too weak (didn't try in AZ).

C Called Chambers of commerce on east coast to get information about cities he might move to, but not about places along the way.

C Not on Internet. Hasn't seen kiosk.

C Stopped at Welcome Center but it was closed. He usually reads the displays at welcome centers to find out about the history and geography of each area.

C He's been reading about congestion at the Grand Canyon. Feels they should find ways to reduce...such as shuttles. Same for Yosemite.

C Past trips has been part business and part vacation. His company's travel agent has handled reservations.

### ***Man traveling with wife from Oakland - Self Planning/Mixed Tech***

C Heard friends talking about Sedona. Had been to Arizona a few years ago. Haven't been to Grand Canyon.

C Flew from Bay area to Phoenix and rented a car.

C Called around for airfares and car rentals. Got 800 numbers from yellow pages. Also booked a hotel reservation based on yellow pages. Didn't like it once they got here, so they canceled and drove around until they found the Days Inn.

C His wife searched the Internet for hotels. Found a lot of good information about hotels and rates. (But he made the plans from the yellow pages...go figure.)

C Not sure where to go at Grand Canyon - have just asked around. Will go to south rim as it's closer.

C Used a AAA map for trip from Phoenix to Flagstaff. Encountered some freeway construction on I-17 near Flagstaff. Detour signs...he followed signs (not VMS).

C Did not call any general 800#, thought it would have been useful. Didn't know of any...just airline, hotel and car rental numbers listed in yellow pages.

C Did see an information kiosk in Sedona. His wife looked at it, he did not. (She wasn't available.)

C Didn't remember any VMSs. Did not try to access targeted radio stations, no reason to. He has used them before when in hazardous conditions.

C Selected restaurants by driving around.

C Everything has gone smoothly, his information sources were sufficient. But will probably access more information now that he knows it is available.

### ***Grand Canyon Tourist Interviews***

#### ***Family from Dayton, OH, vacation tagged to business trip - Self Planners/Mixed Tech***

C Had business in Anaheim. Decided to take tour of west. Son wanted to see Grand Canyon. Flew into Albuquerque and rented car.

C Checked Internet and airlines they do business with for airfares. AAA got them the best deal.

C Wife made driving plans and decided things they wanted to see. Used a combination of the Internet, AAA maps and TripTik, and AAA Guidebooks. Used Internet to support information in guidebooks. No particular trouble finding information.

C Called hotels from AAA guidebooks. Didn't use Internet for hotel reservations.

C Two week trip included Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Taos, Grand Canyon, Las Vegas and Anaheim.

C Haven't encountered any kiosks. Saw VMS signs in NM, slowed down but no detours.

C Listened to targeted radio in Albuquerque. Useful info...slow down due to accident.

- C Internet is a good alternative, but not as much info on hotels in this area as the AAA guidebook. Not many listed, got better deals through AAA.
- C When he uses Internet, looks for reputable sites - commercial or governmental.
- C For restaurants, asks in local area. Stays away from franchises.
- C Most useful trip planning tool...AAA Guidebooks. Can rely on cleanliness.
- C It rained at Canyon and they weren't expecting it. Would have liked to be able to check weather at a kiosk if there had been one.

***School Teacher from New Orleans traveling with husband - Self Planner/Mixed Tech***

- C Wanted to see Grand Canyon and Sequoias. Flew to Phoenix and rented a car.
- C Called AAA for information. Got a TripTik. They always use AAA driving info and have never had any problems.
- C Called Delta directly for airline reservations.
- C Decided on Best Western throughout. Call their 800# and made reservations. Had heard from friends that Best Westerns are nice.
- C Her daughter got a little information about the Grand Canyon on the Internet. She was in school and busy when they made reservations, so didn't take time to search Internet. She usually sends off for info, but didn't take time for that either. Didn't want to know too much...wanted to be surprised.
- C Has seen no kiosks. Listened to targeted radio, but no pertinent information. Saw VMS signs but no problems were reported.
- C Will use Internet more in future. Son uses it a lot, but her husband doesn't like.
- C Would use kiosks for info if available.

***Couple from Great Britain on Anniversary Trip - Travel Broker***

- C Three week anniversary trip to US, wanted to see Grand Canyon.
- C Bought British Airways package which included airfare, trip plan (very like a TripTik) and accommodations. They selected key places they wanted to go ("everyone knows about the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone") and British Airways added others.
- C Looked at some books they got from friends and have picked up brochures as they've gone along.
- C Have had some problems with highway signage. Due to unclear highway markings, they've gone down some wrong roads. Stopped when lost and asked directions.
- C Have seen some VMS signs, were made to detour at Sequoia Park in California.
- C Saw signs for targeted radio but didn't try to use.
- C Felt that weather and traffic info would be helpful on a kiosk...but they really haven't had any problems or need for such info.

***Man from England - Self Planner/Mixed Tech***

- C Two years ago he did a trip that included a bus tour of the Grand Canyon. Last year went to Colorado (used Internet to plan that trip). Saw a travel program on Grand Canyon on TV and decided to return.
- C Used Internet to get details about Grand Canyon. Then went to travel agent and got literature. Decided it was easier to do it himself.
- C Called USAir 800# (he had used for Colorado) for airline reservations.
- C Use Internet to find hotels. Made some reservations on line, some via 800 numbers. Hotels have all been superb.
- C Used map to determine route.
- C Used 800# for mule trip.
- C Has not encountered kiosks. Picked up brochures at hotel in Phoenix. Did stop at tourist info center and ask what's to see.
- C Watched cable tourist station in hotel. Told about local attractions.

- C Considers Internet to be far better than conventional trip planning tools. Got detailed info on Grand Canyon, photos, hotels (with photos of rooms). More personal way of planning, get what you want.
- C Would definitely use kiosk if available.

***Middle-aged man from Michigan traveling with wife - Travel Broker & Self Planner/Low Tech***

- C Daughter lives in area, works at Squire Inn. Came to see new grand-daughter.
- C Flew to Las Vegas (much cheaper) and rented car. He is a frequent visitor to Las Vegas and gets comp rooms there.
- C Used travel agency for airline reservations. Daughter booked hotel room at Squire Inn. He called around for rental car rates.
- C He is computer illiterate, does not use Internet.
- C Doesn't remember seeing any VMSs.
- C Tuned into targeted radio at Boulder Dam. Couldn't get 530 am but did get 1600 fm station. Didn't try to get any others. He would have used an alternate route around Boulder Dam if he had know it took 30 minutes to get across.
- C Didn't like the fact that the road signage for Williams "sucks you off the highway" and through their town by telling you that Business 40 is the way to the Canyon. Good move on part of Williams businesses, but he didn't like it.
- C Has seen no kiosks.
- C Commented on lack of road side rest areas.
- C Said he would use kiosks if they offered road conditions/emergencies (he wouldn't know what to do to avoid, the kiosk would need to provided alternatives); local restaurants; things to do and see besides the Canyon.
- C He gets most information regarding restaurants, accommodations and attractions from highway billboards..."eyesores but invaluable."

***Woman from Scottsdale - Self Planner/Low Tech***

- C Wanted to see Grand Canyon, get away from heat.
- C Got guidebooks and map from AAA. Selected hotels from guidebook and called them directly. Used guidebook to find restaurants too.
- C Heard about Flagstaff from friends, heard Cardinals were practicing there.
- C They ran into a log of construction in Flagstaff. Saw one VMS but it wasn't working.
- C Tried to tune into targeted radio at Canyon, couldn't find station.
- C Would like to know of an 800# that can provide complete info, isn't aware of one.
- C Has not seen kiosk, but thinks they would be great for weather and road conditions. Would like to have info about convenience stores and other non-tourist things that you need. Would also like restaurant information with price ranges, dress code, kid friendly status and menus.
- C Would like to get tourism information via TV. ("People with kids always have TV on.") Suggested that there be info about different cities at different times.
- C Expected I-17 to be "wider - at least three lanes each direction. "Are there plans to widen."

***Woman from Show Low - Self Planner/Low Tech***

- C Visiting Grand Canyon on their way back from a driving trip to visit family.
- C Used Atlas and brochures they routinely pick up at hotels in other cities they visit.
- C Called general number for the Grand Canyon. Difficult to get general information about lodging.
- C Have used DPS number for road conditions (when traveling from Show Low to Phoenix) - does not provide current information. Weather and roads information on TV news is often more current.

- C Would like to see VMS used more to keep people out of accident areas. May need to be placed way ahead of accident to offer alternatives.
- C Not aware of targeted radio stations at all.
- C Had not seen kiosks, but like others thought they would be handy. Suggested that they should have medical emergency services listed.

### ***Young man from England traveling Route 66 - Self Planner/High Tech***

- C Blues fan, traveling historic Route 66.
- C Use a combination of Internet, books and maps to plan his trip.
- C Used Internet to book hotels (Best Western) and to order books.
- C Used travel agency for airline and car rental.
- C Has not encountered kiosks but believes they would be useful for local information. Generally goes to the brochure rack when he checks into a hotel.
- C There are lots of sites and information on the Internet, but you are lucky to find what you want. Have to spend a lot of time to piece info together. Sites for particular towns didn't provide a lot of the info he wanted. He wanted to know about accommodations and local events (music, etc.).
- C Grand Canyon TV channel in Flagstaff gave info about Canyon but nothing about the local Flagstaff area.
- C The only traffic problems he encountered were in towns, did not use info from any VMS signs.
- C Tuned into targeted radio at Canyon. Took a while to find and then it was just music.

## ***Branson Tourist Interviews***

### **Man from Texas**

- C Was here two years ago. Here for a week this time.
- C Flew to Tulsa and rented car
- C Selected airline based on low fare ad in local newspaper; called Southwest Airlines direct.
- C Stayed at Cinnamon Inn before and like it. Didn't make reservation, just came and asked for room.
- C Doesn't use travel agency very often.
- C Wife uses Internet. She used to find out what stars would be here and decide who they wanted to see. Bought Wayne Newton tickets in advance (called ticket agent), got others here.
- C Has not seen kiosks, but has seen several visitor centers.
- C Does not recall any VMS or targeted radio signs coming from Tulsa.
- C People are courteous so traffic isn't a problem.
- C Had seen signs for color coded routes but didn't really know what their purpose was.

### **Senior Couple from Michigan**

- C Were here two years ago. Came to celebrate husband's retirement.
- C They were recruited by American Travel Inc. (time share) to tour their facility. Received two nights free there.
- C They drove from Michigan to Chicago, where their children live. Then drove from Chicago to Branson on secondary roads to enjoy countryside. Son-in-law gave them directions out of Chicago. Then used an old Atlas to determine route.
- C Did not make advance hotel reservations. When they got in they went to Baldknobbers, had seen it when they were here before. Then American put them at Ramada for two nights. Looked and around and picked Rodeway because of its convenient location.
- C Waited until they were here to pick shows, then went early to get tickets.

- C Traffic is not really a problem, but they like to be able to walk places. The husband doesn't drive at night. "You get to see more when you walk."
- C Did not use Internet. Did not see kiosks. Saw signs for radio but didn't turn on. Saw VMS signs for construction on 65 - very helpful.
- C Had a map for color coded routes ("they have them everywhere") and understood how they work. Felt they really helped them get around faster. However, "even when it's congested, everyone is so nice."
- C Picked restaurants from coupon book. Picked shows from brochure racks. Felt there was plenty of info available. Husband didn't think he'd use a kiosk even if available..."I'm not on a time schedule."

### **Senior Couple from Minnesota**

- C Have been here five or six times before.
- C Drove from Minnesota, used Atlas and same interstate route they've used before.
- C Called comfort chain (800#) because they've stayed there before get a 30% discount. They were full and referred them to Rodeway. Made advance reservation.
- C Had a few shows in mind and picked out others after they got here. Didn't get tickets in advance...its not a problem.
- C Picked restaurants from discount book and based on proximity to hotel.
- C Happy that there are new roads every time they come. Can't complain about paying half cent sales tax, they see it at work.
- C Stay off 76 as much as possible. Traffic's not really a problem. Use color code routes. Feel they are well signed and a great improvement.
- C Stopped at Visitors Center on Shepherd of the Hills Expressway, but didn't see any kiosk.
- C Saw VMS signs for construction on 65.
- C Tried to get targeted radio, but couldn't get station.
- C Prefers printed maps and rack brochures to information from a kiosk.
- C The only real question they've had is "Is Roy Clark actually here." The person at the visitor's center answered. Would kiosk have answered that?

### **Woman Realtor from Texas, 50's**

- C Has been to Branson twice before. Having been here before she had most of the information she needed.
- C Used Internet to check on current shows. Looked for Cinnamon Inn but couldn't find. Printed out information about shows, hotels and restaurants so that her husband could help her pick.
- C New to Internet, first time she's used for trip planning. Very easy, much better than other methods...no staying on hold, being asked stupid questions. Can do at her leisure. She likes to be in control.
- C Searched for Branson, MO. Doesn't remember CastleRock web site.
- C Flew into Tulsa. Called Southwest Airline direct in response to a newspaper ad. Check Internet to compare airline prices.
- C For trip from Springfield to Branson she used a map she already had. She "loves" maps. Feels sorry for people who can't read maps. (SHE WAS A LITTLE WEIRD)
- C Doesn't think she would use a kiosk once here. She already has info she needs. Others who don't have Internet at home might.
- C Traffic is no problem. She knows the alternate routes and people are courteous.
- C With regard to color coded routes:
  - C She didn't make connection with symbols in street at first. Need signs that tell people to look on pavement for symbols or possibly colored signs along route. This will increase people's confidence that they are going the right way.

- C The yellow route is harder to find, not as well signed. She missed it even tho looking for it.
- C Saw VMS on 65. Doesn't like electronic signs, finds them hard to read but they do get her attention. Fine for an arrow or one word, but not for a longer message.
- C Tried to find targeted radio, but couldn't operate radio in rental car.
- C Need shuttle along 76. They encourage everyone to drive because there is no alternative. If there was an alternative way to get to the theaters, people would use to avoid parking and after show traffic.

### **Two senior couples from Iowa**

- C Have been to Branson before.
- C Wrote to Chamber of Commerce and ordered some books. Had address from last trip.
- C Drove via interstates, using Missouri map. Route was familiar.
- C Had stayed here before. Price range was right and they like the convenient/central location. The first time they came, they called around to hotels advertised in the Branson book.
- C Selected restaurants from the book and based on word of mouth.
- C No problems on trip other than hard rain. Could hardly see VMS's, but they gave good warning of lane closures.
- C Saw signs for radio but didn't try to tune in.
- C One woman has Internet at work but didn't use for trip information.
- C Has not seen kiosks, but thinks they would be helpful.
- C Before, planned shows in advance, but decided to get them here this time since it wouldn't be to busy. Used brochure board at hotel and info in book.
- C Traffic's not a problem with the new roads. The color coded routes really work, you can get away from traffic.
- C Rodeway Inn location is good for using alternative routes. Doesn't have color coded map, but really hasn't needed it.

### **Couple from Kentucky**

- C Been coming to Branson for ten years. Son lives in Springfield and that's how they discovered Branson.
- C Used Highway 60 all the way from Paduka, KY to Springfield. "No brainer."
- C Didn't make plans...they like spur of the moment trips.
- C Wanted to stay on 76. Stopped at Best Western, because they had stayed there before. They were full and sent them to Rodeway with a coupon.
- C Last year they stayed at the lake. They will go there for a few nights. Drove down there last night and made reservation.
- C Didn't plan in advance for shows. Picked out of "book" that they got here at the hotel.
- C Picked restaurants based on where they'd eaten before.
- C Saw VMS on 65.
- C Haven't seen kiosk but think they would be useful at Visitors Centers or hotel lobby. Would be good for finding hotels, since they came w/o reservations.
- C Color coded routes are well signed. Electronic signs (like one they saw on red route) would be good. Roads are much better than they use to be.
- C Traffic is bad on 76, but it always will be. Shows all get out at same time. But its not really a problem. Used to be much worse. Road engineers have done a great job.
- C Tuned into targeted radio. It said Forsythe street was closed so they used another route.
- C Liked idea of shuttle. Thought they would use if it was frequent.

### **Couple from Harrison, Arkansas**

- C Been here many times, know, route, only here for one night this time
- C Have stayed at Rodeway before, just showed up.
- C Has made reservations in past, called hotels direct.
- C Have been to 78 theater before and liked it so they went back. Got tickets here.
- C Has gotten show tickets in advance before. Can get brochures in their own town.
- C Has an 800# for a ticket outlet on a magnet at home. Calls for hotel and show info.
- C Traffic is heavy, seems heavier this fall, but people are polite.
- C Uses blue route mostly, just noticed it a few weeks ago.
- C Saw VMS and radio signs. Did not try to tune in.
- C She's just now taking computer classes and plans to get on Internet.
- C Has not seen kiosks, but would use if available.
- C Liked idea of telephone system for traffic info. Had not heard of.

### **Man from Mexico, MO**

- C Have been here before. Daughter going to college in Springfield.
- C Familiar with route from home. But once he got off of 65 onto Shepherd of the Hills Expressway he had a little trouble. He had gotten a color coded map at a convenience store but didn't take time to look at. Saw signage for color coded routes. Somehow got from red route onto blue by accident. Him and his wife/daughter were in separate cars.
- C Knew what show they wanted to see and went straight to show because they were running late. After show, stopped at first motel they saw to find a room - Rodeway. Usually try to find something earlier in the evening There were more vacancies than he expected.
- C Would make reservations if they had planned further ahead. Has a Branson book from past trips and would use to call hotels.
- C Restaurant selection - drove until they found something open.
- C Saw VMS on 65.
- C Listened to radio and heard about color coded routes. Got a map when he stopped at a convenience store.
- C Is on Internet, but didn't use for this trip. Unaware that there is a Branson site. Has used Internet to research national parks for a later vacation.
- C Kiosks - has not seen one but has heard about similar kiosks in shopping malls.
- C Telephone system - would use if phone number were handy.
- C Plenty of brochures everywhere for show information.
- C Traffic was a problem a few years ago when they came to Whitewater.
- C Thought he would use a shuttle if crossing 76 were viable.

### **Family from St. Louis**

- C Have been to Branson before. Here for wedding - man and woman are getting married at Silver Dollar City.
- C Route is familiar.
- C Made reservations at Best Western Rustic Oaks from a "Travelers Advantage" discount book. But it was downtown, not a convenient location, so they referred them to Rodeway.
- C Mostly come to Branson to go to Silver Dollar City, not for shows.
- C Know about the colored routes. Husband has always used the back streets. 76 is always congested.
- C Tuned into radio station and heard about alternate routes..."standard stuff."
- C Don't use Internet and haven't seen kiosk. Did use ticket ordering kiosk at hotel once on previous trip.
- C Know 76 is always packed. Wouldn't bother to use traffic phone number or kiosk for traffic info.

- C Believe Branson needs a system like Metrolink in St. Louis. Or maybe shuttle buses on 76. They would use them - they use Metrolink at home. Their car sometimes overheats when you idle for too long, would prefer shuttle.

### **Young Couple from Kansas**

- C First trip to Branson. They've heard everyone talk about it. Just got in at midnight last night.
- C They drove. Relatives gave them directions and they had an atlas. Came in on 248. Stopped at a convenience store for directions. Were not given map.
- C They had a book of coupons from Shoney's (in Kansas) that included one for this Rodeway.
- C Haven't decided what to see yet, looking at brochures.
- C Have not seen VMS or radio signs. Not aware of color coded routes. Haven't seen kiosk.
- C Had not heard about telephone system but thought they would use.
- C Wife is on Internet. Used in past for a trip to Chicago...to get tickets to Oprah Winfrey Show.

### **Couple from Illinois**

- C Were here four years ago.
- C Ten hour drive, drove straight through. Used a map. Getting around St. Louis was difficult.
- C Son-in-law got info on Internet on hotels and shows and printed out for them.
- C Found Best Western on Internet and called them. Wanted major chain. They were full and referred to Rodeway.
- C Best Western had an "ad" on Internet site that they could book shows. So they bought tickets for five shows through BW's agent.
- C Restaurants - selected ones around immediate area to avoid traffic.
- C This time traffic is not nearly as bad as four years ago. He had a terrible time trying to figure out alternative routes. Had a map but got confused. Yellow route not marked well. Did not see symbols on roadway. "In traffic you don't have time to look around." Likes color coding, thinks entire roadway should be colored...colored concrete.
- C Saw VMS on 65. Saw signs but couldn't get radio station. Haven't heard about telephone system nor seen kiosk.

### **Senior Couple from Boulder, CO**

- C Came to St. Louis for Air Force reunion and decided to visit Branson. First time here, had heard about from friends.
- C Got AAA maps and travel guides from a friend. Also had other maps. Got book called "Off the Beaten Path" from Barnes and Noble.
- C Knew they wanted to see Andy Williams. Looked on AAA map for what hotel was closest to theater and called direct.
- C People had told them how bad traffic is. Their friend gave them the color coded map from her visit - it showed a back route to the hotel. They haven't had any problem with traffic. Have stayed off of 76.
- C Saw VMS signs on 76 - sometimes they go by so fast you can't read them.
- C Saw signs for radio station but didn't try to tune in.
- C Suggested that yellow route be better marked, had trouble finding when they got off of 65.
- C They are on Internet but didn't use to find info about Branson. Wife used Mapquest to get a map to a location she wanted to reach in St. Louis. Suggested that Branson's website utilize that resource.

- C Called theater direct to make Andy Williams reservations, called hotel direct (had info from friend).
- C Suggested trolley or shuttle as best way to get cars off the roads.
- C Had been told traffic was really bad, not as bad as they expected.

### **Young family with children from Kansas**

- C This is their third trip to Branson so they drove via a familiar route. Came to go to Silver Dollar City.
- C They've stayed at Comfort Inns in other places (they belong to a travel club) so they just called Comfort Inn direct.
- C Bought tickets to Silver Dollar City through her employer.
- C Traffic has been fairly good. Hwy 76 used to be more congested.
- C They received the color coded map on the back of the envelope their SDC tickets came in. Have seen signs for alternate routes but really haven't used. Knew where they were going.
- C On in-room television, saw an explanation of the color coded route system. Thought it was a great idea.
- C Uses Internet at library, but not for this trip. Used to plan trip to Memphis earlier this year, but since they'd been to Branson before, didn't use.
- C Did not see VMS or kiosks. Did see radio sign, but didn't try.
- C Would like to have kiosk to use for finding nearby restaurants. Should show map of where restaurants are located.
- C Telephone system sounded like good idea to them. Wife likes to have lots of information to plan with.
- C When here before they stayed in a condo and would like to have again. A list of rental condos on Internet would be useful - hasn't looked for.
- C Considered Internet to be better for trip planning than a travel agent or tourist brochures because:
  - C There's lots of info and you decide what's important to you.
  - C Travel agent or brochure may not tell you everything you want to know.
  - C You can find info about area other than "tourist" info.

### **Middle Aged Couple from California**

- C First time in Branson, knew very little about area when coming here.
- C Mother paid for all kids and spouses to meet in Branson. Nine in group.
- C Flew to Little Rock because Southwest advertised a low fare to there. Coordinated flight schedules using Internet, but called SW direct for tickets. Only looked at SW, because they had seen low fare in ad.
- C Also used Internet to get info about Branson. Searched for "Branson."
  - C Got information about all shows (dates/times). Found sites for two ticket agencies that offered packages for groups of tickets and selected one. Ticket agency sent them a Branson map with color coded routes.
  - C Found TripUSA site and saw map of Branson. Didn't quite catch color coding, etc.
- C Rented 12 passenger van and drove from Little Rock.
- C Brother-in-law used trip planning software to prepare a trip plan with maps for drive from Little Rock to Branson. Worked great.
- C Woman, who says she's from LA, thinks this is the worst traffic she's ever seen. Now that they've been here a few days, they've learned back roads. Avoid 76 at all costs. Haven't noticed color coded signage.
- C Didn't know enough about Branson for map on Internet to make sense to them when they found it.

- C Haven't seen kiosk but think they would use now that they're here and would understand.
- C Listened to 1610 radio but didn't know enough to understand.
- C TV Channel 4 in room has show info...should include traffic info.
- C Most info they've needed has been readily available.
- C Haven't seen any public buses, wonder if there are any. Recommended subway.
- C Several of the party are heading up to Carthage today. Older adults and kids will stay in Branson. No way for them to get around.
- C If there had been public transit in Branson, they would have taken tour bus from airport. But didn't want to be "trapped."
- C Most signage is fine, but sometimes don't give enough warning to change lanes for turns.

### **Two young women from St. Louis**

- C Came here to attend girlfriend's wedding at Silver Dollar City. Have been to Branson before, but it's been about seven years.
- C Got a list of hotel numbers from the bride and called around. Those hotels were full but referred them to others.
- C Knew driving route from past trips.
- C Once in Branson, traffic was much smoother than last trip. Hotel sent them a flyer with a map. But they haven't noticed signs for color coded routes. Hotel map showed them an alternate route to SDC.
- C On Internet but didn't check for this trip. Saw radio sign, but didn't tune in. Saw VMS - takes too long to read when traffic is moving fast.
- C Thought kiosk and telephone system would be useful. But in general, traffic just wasn't as bad as they had expected.

### **Young Couple from Castville, MO**

- C Live about an hour away, have been here many times.
- C Have a discount card with a list of hotels. Called a bunch until they found one they liked and available.
- C Made reservations for the show...know a guy that works there. Always make motel and show reservations in advance.
- C Just stop at restaurants when they get hungry.
- C Traffic not bad compared to past. Drove down strip to get from Comfort Inn to theater next to Shoji. Did not see color coded route signs. Has map that shows routes.
- C Did not see radio signs or kiosks. Think they would use either kiosk or telephone system for traffic info.
- C Uses Internet, but didn't use for this trip.

### **Two senior couples from Ft. Lauderdale**

- C Flew in, staying at Radisson
- C Used Internet to get information about shows and hotels.
- C Discovered alternative routes by accidents, feels signage is adequate.
- C Would use kiosk if it provided "complete" information regarding shows and restaurants.
- C Would not use map on kiosk, prefers hard copy he can take with him.
- C Liked concept of traffic info phone number.